

BAHA'I STUDIES REVIEW

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Fifty Baha'i Principles of Unity: A Paradigm of Social Salvation¹

Christopher Buck

No two men can be found who may be said to be outwardly and inwardly united. The evidences of discord and malice are apparent everywhere, though all were made for harmony and union.

– Bahá'u'lláh, 'Tablet of Maqṣúd', *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh Revealed After the Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1988, 163–64

The well-being of mankind, its peace and security are unattainable unless and until its unity is firmly established. This unity can never be achieved so long as the counsels which the Pen of the Most High hath revealed are suffered to pass unheeded.

– Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings From the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1990, 186

Abstract

The Baha'i Faith, a young world religion, offers principles of unity – from family relations to international relations – as a paradigm for social salvation. These principles may be studied within the analytic prism of an 'illness/cure' approach to religious soteriologies – a conceptual model in the phenomenology of religions popularized by Stephen Prothero. World religions are systems of salvation, liberation or harmony. Their respective offers of salvation, liberation or harmony respond directly to the human predicament, as defined by each religion. If humanity is plagued by sin, then Christianity's redemptive offer of salvation from sin makes perfect sense. Early Buddhism's offer of liberation – from the fundamental problem of suffering – also fits perfectly in this model. In the Baha'i religion, the plight facing the world is profound estrangement at all levels of society. Therefore the social salvation that the Baha'i religion offers are precepts and practices that augment unity and harmony, as Baha'u'llah proclaims: 'The distinguishing feature that marketh the pre-eminent character of this Supreme Revelation consisteth in that We have ... blotted out from the pages of God's holy Book whatsoever hath been the cause of strife, of malice and mischief amongst the children of men, and have ... laid down the essential prerequisites of concord, of understanding, of complete and enduring unity'. After reviewing Raymond Piper's typology, fifty (50) Baha'i principles of unity are enumerated and briefly described: types of unity propounded by Baha'u'llah in the Tablet of Unity (Lawḥ-i Ittihad); types of unity forecast by 'Abdu'l-Baha in the 'The Seven Candles of Unity'; and types of unity articulated by Shoghi Effendi – a splendid array of understudied elements of the Baha'i social gospel. Since the present study is a first extended survey – of the notion of unity vis-à-vis the Baha'i Faith, based squarely on authenticated primary sources – results are preliminary, not definitive.

Widely acknowledged as the youngest independent world religion, the Baha'i Faith offers an ideology, theory, modality and model of social harmony, or 'unity', for bringing about an ideal world order, from family relations to international relations. Any first-order (i.e. descriptive) phenomenology of the Baha'i religion must therefore appreciate its paradigmatic focus on 'unity and concord' which, for Baha'is, entails harmonizing pluralities in order to advance civilization. A social solution presupposes its opposite, the problem. In the Baha'i worldview, such descriptors as disunity/unity, discord/concord, disharmony/harmony, estrangement/engagement, enmity/amity and so forth, are meaningful concepts for understanding Baha'i belief and its social dynamic in action. These binary opposites can metaphorically be expressed as an 'illness/cure' model of social reality, which model offers a useful phenomenological approach to the study of religions in general, and to the study of the Baha'i Faith in particular.

The present study is therefore contextualized within a broader discussion of the illness/cure soteriological analytical model in the phenomenology of religions, as popularized by the best-selling author, Stephen Prothero, professor of religion at Boston University, who specializes in American religions. Then follows a discussion of how the Baha'i religion frames the human predicament and its resolution, with unity acclaimed as social salvation. As for the history of ideas within Baha'i thought concerning unity, Raymond Frank Piper's typology of Baha'i principles of unity is reviewed. The methodology of the present study is then presented, followed by a discussion of unity as paramount in the Baha'i value system. Some fifty (50) distinct Baha'i principles of unity are then enumerated and briefly described, including, *inter alia*, types of unity as propounded by Baha'u'llah in the Tablet of Unity (*Lawḥ-i Ittīḥād*); other types of unity; types of unity as defined by 'Abdu'l-Baha, beginning with the 'Tablet' of 'The Seven Candles of Unity'; other types of unity; types of unity articulated by Shoghi Effendi as foundational to Baha'i administration and the future World Commonwealth; other unities – a splendid array of understudied elements of the Baha'i social gospel and the social laboratories of their coordinated application in Baha'i communal life.

As to primary sources, every effort has been made to select only exemplars from the Baha'i writings that are authenticated as to the original Persian and Arabic texts (for the writings of Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha) and authorized as to their English translations. In several cases, when authorized English translations are not available, professional (i.e. 'provisional') translations have been given instead. (Where a non-authoritative text has been cited, the status of that text has been indicated as such.) All transliterations, unless otherwise indicated, have been supplied by the present writer (who takes responsibility for any errors), after consulting the relevant original Persian and Arabic texts, with online links provided so that the reader has access to these same primary sources.

Since the present study is a first extended survey, based squarely on authenticated primary sources, of the notion of unity vis-à-vis the Baha'i Faith,² the results are preliminary, not definitive. No doubt additional Baha'i principles of unity will be found that may significantly expand and enrich this list. Finally, conclusions and recommendations for further study are offered.

I. The Illness/Cure Soteriological Model in the Phenomenology of Religions

World religions are systems of salvation, liberation or harmony. Their respective offers of salvation, liberation or harmony are in direct response to what is defined as the human predicament. If humanity's fundamental problem is sin, as in Christianity generally, then Christianity's redemptive offer is that of salvation from sin. Similarly, in early Buddhism, the principal difficulty afflicting the world is suffering. Thus early Buddhism offered liberation from suffering. In the Baha'i Faith, the most recent independent world religion, the human predicament is profound estrangement at all levels of society. Thus the social salvation that the Baha'i religion offers is that of unity, from family relations to international relations.

Universally, the root of all moral and societal problems, and their eventual redemption, may be problematized as the 'human predicament'. Generally, the concept of the human predicament operates as a meaningful category of comparison within the phenomenology of religions. In 'The Human Predicament as Illness: The Medical Model as a Tool for Comparison', John J. Thatamanil proposes a 'standard fourfold medical model or therapeutic paradigm' of the human predicament: (1) diagnosis, (2) etiology (origin or cause), (3) prognosis and (4) therapy.³ The Buddha's Four Noble Truths, for instance, can be mapped out onto this medical model: 'All is suffering (diagnosis); (2) Suffering has a cause, namely craving (etiology); (3) Suffering can be brought to cessation (prognosis); (4) The eightfold path is [the] way to bring an end to suffering (therapy)'.⁴ Thus the medical model is a 'promising tool for comparative religion' since it allows for commensurable comparisons across traditions.⁵

Stephen Prothero adopts a similar illness/cure approach, but reduces the analysis to diagnosis and prognosis. In *God Is Not One* Prothero argues that the world's religions each responds to the 'human predicament' as defined by each religion. Prothero offers this 'admittedly simplistic' four-part approach to his illness/cure model of religious offers of salvation, liberation or harmony: 'Each religion articulates: a problem; a solution to this problem, which also serves as the religious goal; a technique (or techniques) for moving from this problem to this solution; and an exemplar (or exemplars) who chart this path from problem to solution'.⁶ This is an excellent answer to the problem of 'how' to teach world religions in a public school setting. Here are the problem/solution paradigms that Prothero presents for the eight religions he covers in his book:

- *Yoruba (West African)*: The problem is disconnection/the solution is connection with our destinies, to one another, and to sacred power.⁷
- *Hinduism*: The problem is the perpetual cycle of birth, death, rebirth/the solution is liberation.⁸
- *Buddhism*: The problem is suffering/the solution is awakening.⁹
- *Confucianism*: The problem is chaos/the solution is proper social order.¹⁰
- *Taoism*: The problem is lifelessness/the solution is flourishing, to live life to its fullest.¹¹
- *Judaism*: The problem is exile/the solution is to return to God.¹²

- *Christianity*: The problem is sin/the solution is salvation.¹³
- *Islam*: The problem is pride/the solution is submission.¹⁴

This approach has much to commend it, although one may differ as to the problem/solution formulas. In a nutshell, one can say that the Irano-Semitic religions (i.e. Zoroastrianism and the ‘Abrahamic religions’, including Judaism, Christianity, Islam and the Baha’i Faith) offer types of ‘salvation’, variously defined, while South Asian religions (i.e. Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism and Sikhism) offer forms of ‘liberation’, while East Asian religions (i.e. Confucianism and Taoism), along with some indigenous religions (such as the Yoruba tradition referenced above) emphasize the restoration of ‘harmony’ in the cosmic and social order. These promises of salvation, liberation or harmony are offered in direct response to how the human predicament is variously defined in the world’s religious traditions.

II. The Baha’i Problematic of the Human Predicament

As signalled in the epigraph above, Baha’u’llah (1817–92, prophet-founder of the Baha’i Faith), has formulated the human predicament in this striking statement: ‘No two men can be found who may be said to be outwardly and inwardly united. The evidences of discord and malice (*naḡāq*) are apparent everywhere, though all were made for harmony (*ittifāq*) and union (*ittihād*)’.¹⁵ The solution to the human predicament is unity: ‘The well-being of mankind, its peace and security (*īn iṣlāḥ va rāḡat*) are unattainable unless and until its unity (*ittifāq va ittihād*) is firmly established. This unity can never be achieved so long as the counsels (*naṡā’ih*) which the Pen of the Most High hath revealed are suffered to pass unheeded’.¹⁶

The Baha’i doctrine of unity offers a powerful explanatory account of the human predicament and its way out. The central problematic in the Baha’i worldview is estrangement, i.e. ‘disunity’, according to the Universal House of Justice (the democratically elected international Baha’i council that oversees the affairs of the Baha’i world): ‘Few will disagree that the universal disease sapping the health of the body of humankind is that of disunity’.¹⁷

The Baha’i writings use a variety of terms for this basic and pervasive disease of disunity. One such term is ‘estrangement’, an example of which is this: ‘The word of God which the Supreme Pen hath recorded on the seventh leaf of the Most Exalted Paradise is this: O ye men of wisdom among nations! Shut your eyes to estrangement (*bīḡānigī*), then fix your gaze upon unity (*yīḡānigī*)’.¹⁸

If the disease is disunity, what are its symptoms? They range from problems in family relations all the way up to international relations, from divorce to war. Indeed, the Universal House of Justice writes of ‘these other ills’ which ‘are but various symptoms and side effects of the basic disease – disunity’.¹⁹ This calls for a remedy capable of ‘healing the countless ills which, in the final analysis, are the consequences of the disunity afflicting the human family’;²⁰ as the Baha’i International Community has likewise framed the Baha’i remedy/cure analysis. ‘As unity is the remedy for the world’s ills’, the Universal House of Justice further states, pointing to the primary source for this panacea, ‘its one certain source lies in the restoration of religion’s influence in human affairs. The laws and principles revealed by God, in this day, Bahá’u’lláh declares, “are the most potent

instruments and the surest of all means for the dawning of the light of unity amongst men".²¹

III. The Baha'i Response to the Human Predicament: Unity

What, then, does the Baha'i religion offer as a response to the human predicament, as formulated in the previous section? The illness/cure soteriological model in the phenomenology of religions offers a useful approach to understanding the Baha'i paradigm of social salvation. In a number of passages, Baha'u'llah likens the founders of the world religions to skilful physicians who, with their fingers on the pulse of humanity, can diagnose the disease and prescribe the remedy, which will be different from age to age:

The Prophets of God (*payāambarān*) should be regarded as physicians (*pizishkān*) whose task is to foster the well-being of the world and its peoples (*parvarish-i gīrī va kisān-i ān*), that, through the spirit of oneness (*bi-darmān-i yigānigī*), they may heal (*chārih*) the sickness of a divided humanity (*bīmārī-yi bīgānigī*). To none is given the right to question their words or disparage their conduct, for they are the only ones who can claim to have understood the patient (*kālbād*) and to have correctly diagnosed its ailments (*bīmārīhā*). ... The whole of mankind (*mardumān*) is in the grip of manifold ills (*bīmārī*). Strive, therefore, to save its life through the wholesome medicine (*darmān*) which the almighty hand of the unerring Physician (*pizishk-i yazdān*) hath prepared.²²

Here, the 'spirit of oneness' is the equivalent of 'unity', as Baha'u'llah clearly states in this exhortation: 'The Great Being saith: O well-beloved ones! The tabernacle of unity (*yigānigī*) hath been raised; regard ye not one another as strangers (*bīgānagān*). Ye are the fruits of one tree, and the leaves of one branch.'²³ 'Unity' (*yigānigī*) and 'estrangement' (*bīgānigī*) provide a contrasting and rhyming pair of antonyms often used for poetic effect:

The first utterance of Him Who is the All-Wise is this: O children of dust! Turn your faces from the darkness of estrangement (*bīgānigī*) to the effulgent light of the daystar of unity (*yigānigī*). This is that which above all else will benefit the peoples of the earth. O friend! Upon the tree of utterance there hath never been, nor shall there ever be, a fairer leaf, and beneath the ocean of knowledge no pearl more wondrous can ever be found.²⁴

'Abdu'l-Baha (1844–1921), successor to, interpreter and exemplar of the teachings of his father, Baha'u'llah (1817–92), prophet-founder of the Baha'i Faith, wrote: 'O ye beloved of God! Know ye, verily, that the happiness of mankind (*sa'ādat-i 'ālam-i insānī*) lieth in the unity and the harmony (*dar vaḥdat va yigānigī*) of the human race, and that spiritual and material developments are conditioned upon love and amity (*ulfat va maḥabbat*) among all men.'²⁵ Here, 'unity' (*vaḥdat*), 'harmony' (*yigānigī*), 'amity' (*ulfat*) and 'love' (*muḥabbabat*) are roughly synonymous. In another passage, 'Abdu'l-Baha writes of the overriding need of this day and age:

Today (*imrūz*) the one overriding need (*aḥamm-i umūr*, lit. 'most important affairs') is unity and harmony (*ittihād va ittifāq*) among the beloved of the

Lord, for they should have among them but one heart and soul (*bā yik dīgar yik dil*) and should, so far as in them lieth, unitedly withstand the hostility of all the peoples of the world; they must bring to an end the benighted prejudices of all nations and religions and must make known to every member of the human race that all are the leaves of one branch, the fruits of one bough.²⁶

Consistent with the prescriptions propounded by Baha'u'llah as the divine physician for this day and age, 'Abdu'l-Baha, in a tablet revealed in January 1920 for the acclaimed Baha'i journalist and teacher, Martha Root, likens religion to a medicine that can cure the disease of fanaticism, or prejudice, in its various forms. But if religion itself becomes fanatical, then it has ceased to be a remedy, having now become part of the disease that afflicts humanity. In such a state, it would be better to be rid of the religion that is fuelling such turmoil:

For religion (*dīn*) is like unto a remedy (*'alāj*).²⁷ If the remedy (*'alāj*) causes disease (*sabab-i maraḍ*), it is better to abandon it (*tark-i 'alāj aḥsan ast*).

Similarly, religious fanaticism (*ta'aṣṣub-i dīnī*), racial fanaticism (*ta'aṣṣub-i jinsī*), national fanaticism (*ta'aṣṣub-i vaṭanī*), political fanaticism (*ta'aṣṣub-i siyāsī*) – all such prejudices destroy the foundation of humanity (*bunyān-i insānī*) and all these lead to bloodshed and the destruction of mankind (*vīrānī-yi 'ālam-i insānī*). Consequently, as long as those prejudices persist, hideous warfare will continue.

The remedy of this disease is Universal Peace (*'alāj-i īn ṣulḥ-i 'umūmī ast*), and such peace must be organized on behalf of all the powers and nations in a Supreme Tribunal (*maḥkamih-yi kubrā*) and all national and political questions be referred to it for solution.²⁸

Applying the illness/cure soteriological analytical model in the phenomenology of religions to the Baha'i Faith, it is clear that, from the Baha'i perspective, the human predicament, i.e. the metaphorical 'illness' and 'disease' of society – is pervasive 'estrangement' and 'disunity' at all levels of human society – from family relations to race relations to international relations – and that the metaphorical 'cure' or 'remedy' is the promotion and implementation of Baha'i principles of unity.

IV. Piper's Typology of Baha'i Principles of Unity

In 1943–4, Raymond Frank Piper attempted a typology of Baha'i principles of unity that was quite well received and widely disseminated. A typology involves typification of a discrete set of data, that is, imposing a classification system on that data set and structuring it by means of categorical types. Probably the most well-known typology published by a Baha'i academic is Alessandro Bausani's 'Notes for a typology of monotheism', published in 1957.²⁹ Methods for generating typologies are generally underdeveloped, and may appear, more often than not, as a rather arbitrary imposition of categories in order to organize and reduce a body of data, so that it may be more readily comprehended and compared with other sets of commensurable data. Such is the case with Piper's typology of Baha'i principles of unity.

Piper (1888–1962) was professor of philosophy, Syracuse University, Syracuse, New York.³⁰ In 1920, Piper received his PhD in Philosophy from

Boston University after defending his dissertation, *The Metaphysics of Personality in the Light of Recent American Philosophy*.³¹ Since 1920, Piper had been teaching and writing on aesthetics, philosophy and comparative religions. Prior to 5 October 1935, when he spoke on 'The Quest for a Universal Religion', it was reported that Piper had travelled some 45,000 miles over 17 months and 'interviewed 550 people, including such teachers as Krishnamurti, Rabindranath Tagore, Shoghi Effendi and visited the birthplaces of various religions'.³² The purpose of this trip was to prepare 'a philosophical study of government, religion and art'.³³ Some anecdotes surrounding that trip are recounted in the biography of Piper's second wife, Lila, which, oddly enough, is silent as to Piper's Baha'i affiliation, perhaps because Lila, as a missionary who taught in India for nine years, was a committed Methodist. Both were active in the University United Methodist Church.³⁴

Piper's last work, *Cosmic Art*, was completed by Lila and published in 1975.³⁵ This was preceded by his book, *The Hungry Eye: An Introduction to Cosmic Art*, which appeared in 1956.³⁶ It is not clear when Piper became a Baha'i, but it was likely in 1936 or shortly before, judging from the date of his first two Baha'i publications.³⁷ His papers, archived by Syracuse University, provide ample evidence of his wide-ranging research interests, including the subject of the Baha'i Faith itself.³⁸

Piper was a systematic thinker, as evidenced by the ambitious college textbook that he co-authored in 1929: *The Fields and Methods of Knowledge: A Textbook in Orientation and Logic*.³⁹ In like systematic fashion, Piper formulated a typology of Baha'i principles of unity. Piper's paradigm, 'Ways to Wholeness', was published in two instalments in *World Order* magazine.⁴⁰ He later wrote: 'My article on "Ways to Wholeness" (*World Order*, Dec., 1943; Jan., 1944) ... specified a dozen kinds of fruitful ethical unities which remain empty abstractions until individual persons actualize, organize, embody them in action'.⁴¹ Piper specified 16 Baha'i principles of unity, actually. They are:

THREE CLASSIFICATIONS OF UNITIES

I. FOUNDATION UNITIES

A. Spiritual Unities

1. Divine Unity.
2. Prophetic Unity.
3. Religious Unity.
4. Historic Unity.
5. Universal Unity.

B. Human Unities

6. Biological or Racial Unity.
7. Psychological, Mental, or Selfic Unity.

C. Social Aids to Unity

8. Political Unity.
9. Juridical Unity.
10. Economic Unity.
11. Educational Unity.

12. Linguistic Unity.

13. Social Unity.

D. Some Spiritual Aids to Unity

14. Scientific Unity.

15. Aesthetic Unity.

16. Ethical Unity.

The two instalments of 'Ways to Wholeness', enumerating and explicating some 'sixteen unities', were evidently well received, as a special reprint of 'Ways to Wholeness' was prepared: 'A special reprint of Dr. R. F. Piper's "Ways to Wholeness" was prepared for the Bureau, and over 200 copies were mailed out with a personal letter to educators'.⁴² An abridged version of 'Ways to Wholeness' subsequently appeared in *The Bahá'í World* in 1945.⁴³ The inclusion of Piper's article was significant in that *The Bahá'í World* volumes were the most important Baha'i publications next to the authorized translations of Baha'i scriptures. Piper's paradigm must not only have gained the respect of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States and Canada, but also must have earned the approval of Shoghi Effendi, Guardian of the Baha'i Faith (1921–57), since he personally oversaw the publication of the *Bahá'í World* volumes.

V. Methodology of the Present Study

A typology of Baha'i principles of unity implicates an inchoate Baha'i theory of social cohesion, which broadly may be defined as the solidarity, or 'unity', of a group. The Baha'i unity paradigm aims at cultivating social cohesion at all levels of human society, from family relations to international relations. Although there is no agreed definition of social cohesion, social cohesion theories do, however, have three elements in common: (1) shared vision (universal values, mutual respect and common aspirations or identity); (2) well-functioning of a group or community (shared goals and responsibilities and readiness to cooperate with fellow members); and (3) a process (an ongoing dynamic of achieving social harmony).⁴⁴

Although Dr Piper's typology enjoyed high-level approbation and was published widely within the Baha'i context, it has all but been forgotten in the contemporary Baha'i world. Perhaps it is not the substance of Piper's typology itself that is of significance, but the fact that he perceived the pervasive nature of the Baha'i principles of unity and their profound potential for world reform.

As a preliminary investigation into the Baha'i illness/cure soteriology, with its paradigm of unity, the methodology pursued in the present study is simply to inventory those Baha'i principles that are directly presented as 'unity of' or 'oneness of' formulations, as indicated by selected genitive constructions, or 'of-constructions' (i.e. the Persian/Arabic *'idāfa*) involving the Persian/Arabic terms of *ittihād*, *ittifāq*, *yigānigī*, *vahdat*, *ulfat*, etc.⁴⁵

There are, in fact, numerous Baha'i ethical and social teachings. Unlike Piper's selections, however, the principles inventoried here are narrowly restricted to explicit principles of unity, and further delimited to those that are authenticated in the original source languages, where translated texts are marshalled as proof-texts.

Primary sources will therefore be consulted in the original Persian and Arabic source languages (texts by Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha) and, where applicable, in English (texts by Shoghi Effendi). The relatively few texts in Ottoman Turkish (texts by 'Abdu'l-Baha) are not surveyed, however. Thus a typology of Baha'i principles of unity is arguably premature, unless and until such principles are properly inventoried.

VI. Unity as Paramount in the Baha'i Value System

An inventory of Baha'i principles of unity should first be contextualized. These principles spring from the premise that unity is paramount in the Baha'i value system. A single passage (with transliteration of the original Persian text supplied by the present writer), should suffice in underscoring the paramount importance of unity within the Baha'i hierarchy of values:

The utterance of God is a lamp (*mishkāt-i bayān*), whose light (*miṣbāh*) is these words (*īn kalima*): ['O peoples of the world! (*ay ahl-i 'ālam*)' – missing in translation.] Ye are the fruits of one tree, and the leaves of one branch (*hama bār-i yik dārīd va barg-i yik shākhsār*). Deal ye one with another with the utmost love (*bi-kamāl-i maḥabbat*) and harmony (*ittiḥād*), with friendliness (*mavaddat*) and fellowship (*ittifāq*). He Who is the Day-Star of Truth beareth Me witness! So powerful is the light of unity (*nūr-i ittifāq*) that it can illuminate the whole earth (*āfāq*). ... This goal excelleth every other goal (*īn qaṣd sulṭān-i maqāsid*, lit. 'this goal [is] the king of all goals'), and this aspiration is the monarch of all aspirations (*īn amal malik-i āmāl*).⁴⁶

The superlative expressions in this passage are not just rhetorical. They are quite literally true insofar as they represent what may be regarded as not only the paramount Baha'i ideals, but the fundamental orientation and organizing principles of Baha'i precept and praxis.

VII. Baha'i Principles of Unity

Piper's 'Ways to Wholeness' was published in 1943–4. It is now some 68 years later (as of 2012). Piper's paradigm, while attractive initially, has not 'caught on', so to speak, within contemporary Baha'i discourse. Piper's unity paradigm is but a historical footnote, little more than a citation. A fuller and more natural order of Baha'i principles has been long overdue, if indeed unity does have paramount importance in the Baha'i hierarchy of values.

It makes more sense to present Baha'i principles of unity roughly in order of their sources, first by way of Baha'u'llah (1817–92), prophet-founder of the Baha'i Faith (i.e. the 'Manifestation of God' for this day and age according to Baha'i belief), then by 'Abdu'l-Baha (1844–1921), successor to Baha'u'llah, authorized interpreter and matchless exemplar of Baha'i lived ideals, and finally by Shoghi Effendi (1897–1957), 'Guardian' of the Baha'i Faith (successor to 'Abdu'l-Baha).

VIII. Types of Unity as Propounded by Baha'u'llah: The Tablet of Unity (*Lawḥ-i Ittiḥād*)

The Tablet of Unity (*Lawḥ-i Ittiḥād*) is the fullest single statement by Baha'u'llah on the subject of unity. A provisional translation by Moojan Momen was published in 2001.⁴⁷ This tablet was revealed by Baha'u'llah,

during the 'Akka period (1868–92), in response to a question posed by Siyyid Asad'u'llāh of Rasht (in northern Iran): 'Thou hast asked about unity (*ittihād*)'.⁴⁸ This tablet is dated sometime after c.1879 when Siyyid Asad'u'llah converted to the Baha'i Faith – along with his four brothers (the 'Sādāt-i Khams') – through the efforts of the celebrated Baha'i poet and teacher, Āqā 'Alī-Ashraf-i-Lāhijānī, known by his sobriquet, 'Andalīb ('Nightingale').⁴⁹ Baha'u'llah expatiates on six or seven (depending on whether the last two are read as one) kinds of unity, expounding on such aspects of unity as 'religion' (*dīn*), 'speech' (*qawl*), religious 'acts' (*āmāl*), 'rank' or 'station' (*maqām*), 'souls' (*nufūs*), and earthly 'wealth' (*amvāl*).

1. Unity Within Religion (*ittihād dar dīn*): This first unity, which Baha'u'llah prioritizes (perhaps for the benefit of the recipient), sets the context for the remaining types of unity. Distinct from the plurality of 'unity of religion' (see below), 'unity in religion' is a singularity. It is unity within the Baha'i community itself: 'The first kind of unity is unity in religion (*ittihād dar dīn*)'. Clearly, the questioner was not united with his own Baha'i community. Of Siyyid Asad'u'llah, Mīrzā Yahyā 'Amīdu'l-Atibbā Hamadānī, a contemporary, wrote: 'Although he was a believer, he hid his allegiance and strenuously avoided all the Baha'is of Rasht.'⁵⁰ This may, in part, explain why Baha'u'llah begins his discourse with the problem of consolidation within the religious community.

Religious solidarity 'has always been the cause of the victory of the Faith of God in every age and century', as Baha'u'llah underscores metaphorically: 'Togetherness is the mystic sword of God'.⁵¹ Here, what Momen translates as 'togetherness' is *ijtimā'*, which Shahrokh Monjazez renders 'assemblage of people'⁵² and Juan Cole as 'gathering together'.⁵³ This latter translation has been used in official Baha'i translations, such as this sentence from the 'Tablet of the World' (*Lawḥ-i Dunyā*): 'The mere act of your gathering together is enough to scatter the forces of these vain and worthless people'.⁵⁴ Here, 'gathering together' is religious in nature.

In this passage, Momen translates *saif-i ma'navī-yi ilāhī* as the 'mystic sword of God', where Steingass glosses *ma'nawī* as 'Significant; true, real, intrinsic, essential, absolute; spiritual'.⁵⁵ This quintessential or real 'sword' (*saif*) is not a weapon of war. Rather, it is an instrument of success. The 'victory' in the struggle to overcome religious division internally in order to advance religion externally and, in turn, to fulfil its transformative role in the betterment of society.

Religious unity can prove to be a powerful social model that ultimately can attract the interest of government, as Monjazez translates: 'For instance, if at the present time a government realizeth that the majority of its citizens have rent the veil asunder and directed themselves toward the Horizon of God's Revelation [i.e. Baha'u'llah] it would be compelled to take note and listen'.⁵⁶ For such to become a reality, other kinds of unity must come into play as well.

2. Unity in Speech (*ittihād dar qawl*): It stands to reason that a faith-community should speak with one voice, and that its public discourse ought to truly reflect its social cohesion. 'And another kind of unity is unity in speech (*ittihād dar qawl*)', Baha'u'llah writes. He explains that internal dissension can foment discord and thus deprive the community of the inherent power of its unity.

'Unity in speech' has three dimensions: (1) unity of discourse; (2) harmony of word and deed; and (3) exercise of wisdom in speech. Here, Baha'u'llah speaks also of voluntary sharing and of personal virtue. More effective than ideal discourse are ideal deeds: 'That which aids the One True God has always been and is words (*bayān*, lit. 'explanation'), but in this most mighty Dispensation, [goodly] deeds and a goodly character are the hosts of the One True God and are responsible for the triumph of the Cause'.⁵⁷ Thus the advancement of the Baha'i community is coefficient with the degree to which its adherents contribute to the betterment of society.

3. Unity in [Ritual] Acts (*ittiḥād-i a'māl*): This unity focuses not on deeds in general, but on pious practices in particular, which can divide as well as unite: 'And in another respect, unity in [ritual] acts (*ittiḥād-i a'māl*) is intended. For any difference in these is the cause of disunity.'⁵⁸ Monjazez translates *a'māl* as 'actions'⁵⁹ and Cole as 'deeds'.⁶⁰

Baha'u'llah points to Islam as a case in point, having split over praxis. From the 'ocean' of Islam have branched numerous 'gulfs': 'Thus one gulf is Shi'a, one gulf is Sunni, one Shaykhī, another Shāh Ni'matu'llāhī, one Naqshbandī, another Malāmatī, one Jalālī, another Rafā'ī, and yet another Kharābātī'. These sects and Sufi orders have compromised Islam: 'Thus are multiplied the innumerable pathways to hell. Thus do the stones weep and the Pen of the All-High laments'.⁶¹ Monjazez points out that the clear implication here is that differences of actions (*ikhtilāf-i a'māl*), such as divergent modes of worship, etc., have led to the weakening of religion, especially Islam.⁶² From this perspective, such pluralism has come at considerable cost, as the Islamic world has forfeited its former role as a (medieval) superpower and is now in a state of malaise. A parallel text that emphasizes power of the Baha'i revelation to promote transconfessional affinity, i.e. ideal interfaith relations, is the following:

The second question concerneth faith and religion (*kīsh va āyīn*). The Faith of God (*kīsh-i yazdān*) hath in this day been made manifest. He Who is the Lord of the world (*jahāndār*) is come and hath shown the way (*rāh*). His faith is the faith of benevolence and His religion is the religion of forbearance (*kīsh-ash nīkūkārī va āyīn-ash burdbārī*). This faith bestoweth eternal life (*zindigī-yi pāyandih*) and this religion enableth mankind to dispense with all else. It verily embraceth all faiths and all religions (*īn kīsh va āyīn dārā-yi kīsh-hā va āyīn-hā-st*). Take hold thereof and guard it well.⁶³

While this text emphasizes *intra*-religious unity (i.e. unity *within* religion, i.e. a single religion, the Baha'i Faith), other passages promote *inter*-religious unity (i.e. unity *among* religions). (See principle #11, *infra*.)

4. Unity of Station (*ittiḥād-i maqām*): There is a shift now from assemblage to self: 'And amongst the realms of unity is the unity of rank and station (*ittiḥād-i maqām*)'. Here, 'unity' means 'equality' of station. The ideal demeanour of Baha'is is to see one's own self in relation to others, such that all people might ideally be on the same 'plane' (*ṣuq'*) and station (*maqām*). If this were truly put into practice, then 'the world would become as the Abhá Paradise'.⁶⁴ Thus Paradise may be realized in the here-and-now, just as it may be gained in the Hereafter, if unity of station is put into practice.

5. Unity of Souls (*ittihād-i nufūs*): Although treated as a distinct type of unity, ‘unity of souls’ bears some resemblance to ‘unity in religion’. The subtle difference here likely inheres in the integrity of the faith-community in putting into practice professed ideals, as distinct from social cohesion within the community itself: ‘The meaning of the unity of souls (*ittihād-i nufūs*) is that all should gather around and cling to the Love of God and the Word of God’.⁶⁵ Indeed, all of the types of unity propounded in the Tablet of Unity interrelate, as explicitly stated in this passage:

These unities (*ittihād-hā*) that We have mentioned are each an army among the hosts of God, a part of the party of God, and a command that is part of the Decree of God. The unity of souls (*ittihād-i nufūs*), from the beginning of creation until now, hath been and shall be that which doth assist and bring victory to the Truth – that is to say that unity that is established according to the Decree of God and His Law. In this station, unity does not exceed this degree.⁶⁶

The next type of unity is more challenging because it involves a certain measure of sacrifice in terms of one’s wealth.

6. Unity of People and Wealth (*ittihād-i nufūs va amvāl*): Baha’u’llah concludes the discourse on the several manifestations of unity within Baha’i communities so: ‘Another example is the unity of souls and of wealth (*ittihād-i nufūs va amvāl*) and with this example we will end our discourse on unity.’ Here, by ‘wealth’, Baha’u’llah means money, property, goods, earthly possessions, etc. He exhorts people (*nufūs*) to be united so that they can give their wealth (*amvāl*) to one another altruistically, as needed.

After acknowledging the virtues of equality, Baha’u’llah goes on to explain that voluntary sharing (*muṣāṣāt*) ranks higher than equitable distribution of wealth (*musāṣāt*). ‘This station goes beyond just equality’ in that altruistic individuals who ‘prefer others over themselves have a station that, in truth, is above this station, as has already been ... revealed in the Qur’an’. Baha’u’llah then cites Q. 59:9 as a proof-text (‘and preferring others above themselves, even though poverty be their portion ...’).⁶⁷ Baha’u’llah states that unity of wealth (*ittihād-i amvāl*) is the source of cheer and joy and exultation and that, from it, the attribute of voluntary sharing – that is, charitable giving (*muṣāṣāt*) – is manifested. Thus, the philanthropy of *muṣāṣāt* exceeds the equitable distribution of wealth that is the reflex of *musāṣāt*. On this principle, which has limits, Shahrokh Monjazeb has commented:

Baha’u’llah warns, however, that this act of ‘charitable giving’ is only limited to ‘earthly possession’ (*māl*) and nothing more. Baha’u’llah then states that this attribute (i.e. *muṣāṣāt*) ranks above ‘equality’ (*musāṣāt*). He defines equality as when a person expends generously to his fellow men the material riches that God has bestowed upon him. ... But the acts of those who prefer others over themselves is even nobler, for in this state the person is sacrificing his own material needs for the needs of others. ... Baha’u’llah insists that the act of ‘charitable giving’ (*muṣāṣāt*) is only confined to material possessions. In fact, in another Tablet, in which He expounds on the meaning of *muṣāṣāt*, Baha’u’llah declares that the act of anyone who exceeds this limitation is considered before God only the result of the prompting of his over-indulgent self and passion.⁶⁸

Similarly, in his 'Tablet to The Hague', 'Abdu'l-Baha states that 'among the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh is voluntary sharing of one's property with others among mankind', adding: 'This voluntary sharing is greater than equality, ... [in] that man should not prefer himself to others, but rather should sacrifice his life and property for others ... and spend willingly for the poor, just as is done in Persia among the Bahá'ís'.⁶⁹

7. Unity of God (*tawhīd-i ilāhī*): Baha'u'llah ends this tablet by reminding the recipient to contemplate God: 'Everyone must meditate upon God and in particular upon the Unity of God (*tawhīd-i ilāhī*)'.⁷⁰ *Tawhīd*, the doctrine of the Oneness of God, is the most fundamental concept of monotheism in Islam. Meditating on the transcendence and mystery of God orients the believer's thoughts, in which the proverbial 'brotherhood of man' follows from the 'fatherhood of God'. This particular 'unity' (*tawhīd*), it should be pointed out, is distinct from *ittiḥād* and its synonyms. Whereas *ittiḥād* conveys the idea of unifying people, *tawhīd* has no such meaning in reference to God. In Baha'i doctrine, the unity of God transcends even intrinsic oneness, and so is beyond numeric singularity. So, in a sense, it could be argued that the 'unity of God' cannot be considered among the various kinds of unity enumerated in this paper, and certainly, in the Tablet of Unity, Baha'u'llah does not conflate *ittiḥād* and *tawhīd*. In popular Baha'i discourse, however, the 'Three Onenesses' (of God, the Messengers of God, and humankind), are widely proclaimed as the epitome of Baha'i belief. These three unities are formally expressed in the following statement by Shoghi Effendi: 'The Baha'i Faith upholds [1] the unity of God, recognizes [2] the unity of His Prophets, and inculcates [3] the principle of the oneness and wholeness of the entire human race'.⁷¹

IX. Types of Unity as Propounded by Baha'u'llah: Other Types of Unity

8. Unity of Existence (Oneness of Being) and Manifestation (Arabic: *waḥdat al-wujūd wa shuhūd*/Persian: *vaḥdat-i vujūd va shuhūd*): The previous principle of unity should steer the believer away from the pantheistic inclination of Sufi mystics who predicated their claims of union with God (via such peak mystical experiences as beatific vision or divine audition) on notions of divine immanence pervading creation.

In Baha'u'llah's pre-eminent mystical work, *The Seven Valleys* (*Haft Vādī*), a Sufi doctrine known as the 'oneness of being' and commonly construed as pantheism, is referenced: 'In this Valley, the wayfarer leaveth behind him the stages of the 'oneness of Being and Manifestation' (*vaḥdat-i vujūd va shuhūd*) and reacheth a oneness (*vaḥdat*) that is sanctified above these two stations. Ecstasy alone can encompass this theme, not utterance (*bayān*) nor argument; and whosoever hath dwelt at this stage of the journey, or caught a breath from this garden land, knoweth whereof We speak'.⁷²

Here, this 'oneness' is not the 'Unity of Existence and Manifestation' *per se*, but rather what is described as 'a oneness that is sanctified *above* these two stations' (emphasis added) which has no name because it is beyond description, representing the pinnacle of mystical experience, which is ineffable. Elsewhere, Baha'u'llah explains that true 'unity of vision' (*tawhīd-i shuhūdī*) is witnessing God's attributes and seeing the reflection of God's uniqueness in all things.⁷³ Further to this line of discussion, 'Abdu'l-Baha's

discourse on the distinction between the Baha'i doctrine of 'manifestation' and the Sufi doctrine of 'emanation' (leading to pantheism) is illuminating, but 'technical' in its intricate elucidation of the relevant Sufi metaphysical terms.⁷⁴

9. Unity of the Manifestations of God (*maqām-i tawhīd*): From the doctrine of the unity of God, it follows that anything that emanates from God must likewise be a unity. This holds true for any and all revelations from God. A major Baha'i doctrine is that of prophetic unity, wherein all Messengers of God – such as Abraham, Moses, Christ and Muhammad in the Abraham faiths, along with Zoroaster, Krishna and the Buddha in the Indo-Aryan religions, for instance – are considered one in spirit and teachers of religious doctrines that are quintessentially harmonious, as Baha'u'llah metaphorically writes in this oft-quoted passage:

Inasmuch as these Birds of the Celestial Throne are all sent down from the heaven of the Will of God, and as they all arise to proclaim His irresistible Faith, they therefore are regarded as one soul and the same person. ... Sayings such as this, which indicate the essential unity (*tawhīd*) of those Exponents of Oneness, have also emanated from the Channels of God's immortal utterance, and the Treasuries of the gems of divine knowledge, and have been recorded in the scriptures.⁷⁵

As mentioned in Principle #7, *supra*, this key doctrine is explained by Shoghi Effendi: 'The Bahá'í Faith upholds the unity of God, recognizes the unity of His Prophets, and inculcates the principle of the oneness and wholeness of the entire human race'.⁷⁶ These are the so-called 'Three Onenesses' in popular Baha'i discourse.

10. Spiritual Oneness (*vaḥdat-i rawḥānī*): In the untranslated Persian section of the Tablet of the Holy Mariner (the Arabic portion of which was the first complete tablet that Shoghi Effendi translated following his appointment as the Guardian of the Baha'i Faith),⁷⁷ there is a scene in which the captain of the Baha'i ship of salvation, called the 'Crimson Ark', imparted a secret to the dwellers of the Ark that transports them with such joy that they attain 'spiritual oneness' or 'unity of spirit'.

In this extended Baha'i allegory, there came a decree from Heaven, which the 'eternal Mariner' (*mallaḥ-i baqā'*) discloses to the shipmates (*ahl-i fulk*) – not in full, but in part – divulging but a single letter from the mystic, arcane word (*ḥarfī az kalima-yi ikhfā'*) sent from Heaven, so that, with assistance from the invisible realm, these seafarers might pass through the Valley of Bewilderment of their lower natures (*vādī-yi ḥayrat-i nafsānī*), enter into the joyous atmosphere of spiritual oneness (*vaḥdat-i rawḥānī*), and reach the summit of the divine Qāf of Immortality (*qāf-i baqā'-yi jān*) [mystic mountain thought to be in Qafqāz], to attain the presence of the Beloved (*liqā'-i ḥadrat-i jānān*), who is Baha'u'llah.⁷⁸

Of course, the reader who has little or no familiarity with the Tablet of the Holy Mariner will not understand this allegory, but it is nevertheless recounted here in the course of cataloguing the various Baha'i principles of unity.

11. Unity/Peace Among Religions: This Baha'i principle of unity is inferred from such passages as the following, which is from the 'Tablet of Ornaments' (*Lawḥ-i Tarāzāt*) where 'ornaments' metaphorically refer to attributes of a goodly and godly character:

The second Ṭaráz is to consort with the followers of all religions (*mu'āsharat bā adyān*) in a spirit of friendliness and fellowship (*bi-rawḥ va rayḥān*), to proclaim (*iẓhār*) that which the Speaker on Sinai (*mukallam al-ṭūr*, i.e. the Manifestation/Interlocutor of God) hath set forth and to observe fairness (*inṣāf*) in all matters.

They that are endued with sincerity and faithfulness (*aṣḥāb-i ṣafā va vafā*) should associate (*bāyad ... mu'āsharat namāyand*) with all the peoples and kindreds of the earth (*bā jamī'-i ahl-i 'ālam*) with joy and radiance (*bi-ruḥ va rayḥān*), inasmuch as consorting (*mu'āsharat*) with people hath promoted and will continue to promote unity and concord (*sabab-i ittihād va ittifāq*), which in turn are conducive to the maintenance of order in the world (*ittihād va ittifāq sabab-i niẓām-i 'ālam*) and to the regeneration of nations (*ḥayāt-i umam*). Blessed (*tūbā*) are such as hold fast to the cord of kindliness and tender mercy (*ḥabl-i shafaqat va ra'fat*) and are free from animosity and hatred (*zaḡhīnih va baghẓā*).⁷⁹

In this remarkable passage (that is, noteworthy with respect to the scriptures of world religions generally), the term '*rayḥān*' literally means 'fragrance' and refers to the herb, sweet basil, a spice that has its own pleasant aroma. Steingass defines *rayḥān* as 'sweet basil; any odoriferous herb'.⁸⁰ Here, the purport of the metaphor is given, rather than its literal translation.

Friendly association with adherents of religions other than one's own co-religionists is no guarantor of interfaith concord, of course, but certainly it is a step in the right direction. From this standpoint, it has been suggested that *mu'āsharat* is a 'precursor' to *ittihād*.⁸¹

One barrier to interfaith confraternity is the law of ritual impurity, where contact with adherents of other religions must be minimized for fear of contamination. Baha'u'llah proclaimed that this barrier, in principle (and thus, eventually, in practice), has been abolished:

God hath, likewise, as a bounty from His presence, abolished the concept of 'uncleanness', whereby divers things and peoples have been held to be impure. ... Verily, all created things were immersed in the sea of purification when, on that first day of Riḍván, We shed upon the whole of creation the splendours of Our most excellent Names and Our most exalted Attributes. ... Consort (*'āshirū*) ye then with the followers of all religions (*al-adyān*), and proclaim ye the Cause of your Lord, the Most Compassionate; this is the very crown of deeds, if ye be of them who understand.⁸²

Here, Baha'u'llah categorically abolishes the Islamic law of ritual impurity, whereby certain things (and people) are declared to be defiling (*najis*) when, if touched, will alter a Muslim's state of ritual purity by contamination. In Shi'i teaching, moreover, non-Muslim minorities are deemed ritually impure. Restrictions were thus imposed on Zoroastrians, Jews and Christians so that Muslims could avoid pollution by unwanted contact. The result was avoidance at the cost of social solidarity. No society could be truly egalitarian under such alienating practices. By sweeping away this pejorative category and its oppressive practices, Baha'u'llah, in theory if not in practice, opened the way to social rapprochement across intercommunal boundaries within predominantly Muslim societies and thereby reducing, if not eliminating sectarian strife over time.

A corollary of the principle of unity among religions is that of peace among religions. Baha'u'llah's first legislative act, in fact, was the abolition of holy war (*jihād*). Notwithstanding, 'Abdu'l-Baha (see below) wrote of the continuing problem of 'war among the religions'.⁸³ In a tablet addressed to the 'Congress of Religions' (*kungrih-yi adyān*), 'Abdu'l-Baha states that what is needed is 'peace among religions' (*sabab-i ṣulḥ bayn adyān shavad*).⁸⁴ In other words, unity among religions is an essential prerequisite to world peace. This tablet was addressed to the Unitarian minister, Dr Charles William Wendte (1844–1931), secretary of the sixth International Congress of Religious Progress, held in Paris from on 16–22 July 1913, and to which 'Abdu'l-Baha was invited to participate.⁸⁵ In fact, 'Abdu'l-Baha was invited, in person, by the French members of the organizing committee during a visit to the Protestant Theological Faculty in Paris in 1913. The fact that Dr Wendt is addressed by name it means that 'Abdu'l-Baha must have received a written invitation as well.⁸⁶ This tablet was first published in the Persian section of *Star of the West*.⁸⁷ An English translation may be found in *Abdul Baha on Divine Philosophy*,⁸⁸ and in *Abdul Baha in Egypt*,⁸⁹ although the two translations differ somewhat. On peace among religions (which, as stated, is a corollary of unity among religions), 'Abdu'l-Baha writes:

My honorable and dear friend: Your kind letter was received and its contents became the means of happiness (*sabab-i surūr-i vujdān*, literally 'cause of the joy of conscience'), for it indicated the fact that a number of the well-wishers of humanity have put forth a mighty effort to organize the Sixth International Congress of Free and Progressive Christians and other Religious Liberals (*kungrih-yi adyān*), literally 'Congress of Religions', so that they may establish good-fellowship among the various sects (*sabab-i ulfat bayn-i adyān*) and unveil the reality of religion (*ḥaqīqat-i dīn*), investigate the foundation of divine faith and remove the present misunderstandings (*sū'-i tafāhum*) rampant among the nations (not in the original). ... I hope that the noble congress (*anjuman*, without 'noble') may become assisted in the affiliation of the hearts of the peoples of the world and create a compact of eternal peace among the adherents of religion (*sabab-i ṣulḥ bayn-i adyān shavad*); so that the world (*dar 'ālam-i insānī*) may become free from strangeness (*bīgānigī*) and all the followers of religions may be ushered into the tent of amity which is the universal tabernacle of the oneness of the world of humanity (*jamī'-i adyān bi-'ālam-i yigānigī ya'nī vaḥdat-i 'ālam-i insānī dar āyand*, literally, 'followers of all religions may enter into the world of unity, that is, the oneness of the world of humanity').⁹⁰

Baha'is expect that, over the course of time, affinity among religions will increase to the point that differences will be subordinated to common denominators shared by most, if not all major world religions, which, in any case, are expected to ultimately merge as part of the future golden age of world civilization that the Baha'i texts envision. Thus, 'unity among religions' will culminate in 'unity in religion'. Peace among religions is part of the agenda of the Lesser Peace, a term that Baha'i texts use to describe the process of progressive reconciliation among nations and improved international relations as the world advances in its social evolution, eventually dispensing with war altogether in favour of more direct and far less costly mechanisms of conflict resolution.

X. Types of Unity as Defined by ‘Abdu’l-Baha: The Seven Candles of Unity

‘Abdu’l-Baha (1844–1921) was Baha’u’llah’s eldest son, appointed successor, authorized interpreter and perfect exemplar of Baha’i ideals. Perfectly consistent with Baha’u’llah’s teachings above, ‘Abdu’l-Baha emphasized the importance of unity:

It is certain that the greatest of instrumentalities for achieving the advancement and the glory of man, the supreme agency for the enlightenment and the redemption of the world, is love and fellowship and unity among all the members of the human race. Nothing can be effected in the world, not even conceivably, without unity and agreement, and the perfect means for engendering fellowship and union is true religion.⁹¹

Just as the Tablet of Unity is the single most important statement on unity by Baha’u’llah, the tablet known as the ‘Seven Candles of Unity’ is the single most important statement on unity by ‘Abdu’l-Baha. In a tablet (dated 1906) written for Jane Elizabeth Whyte (1857–1944), an ardent sympathizer of the Baha’i Faith, if not the first native Baha’i in Scotland,⁹² ‘Abdu’l-Baha presages seven types of world ‘unity’ that will eventually come to pass:

O honoured lady!... Behold how its [unity’s] light is now dawning upon the world’s darkened horizon. The first candle is unity in the political realm, the early glimmerings of which can now be discerned. The second candle is unity of thought in world undertakings, the consummation of which will ere long be witnessed. The third candle is unity in freedom which will surely come to pass. The fourth candle is unity in religion which is the corner-stone of the foundation itself, and which, by the power of God, will be revealed in all its splendour. The fifth candle is the unity of nations – a unity which in this century⁹³ will be securely established, causing all the peoples of the world to regard themselves as citizens of one common fatherland. The sixth candle is unity of races, making of all that dwell on earth peoples and kindreds of one race. The seventh candle is unity of language, i.e., the choice of a universal tongue in which all peoples will be instructed and converse. Each and every one of these will inevitably come to pass, inasmuch as the power of the Kingdom of God will aid and assist in their realization.⁹⁴

Here, the seven ‘candles of unity’ are the motive force in the social evolution of the planet that will culminate in the establishment of a global commonwealth, leading to a future golden age of world civilization. In *Century of Light* (an official Baha’i statement commissioned by the Universal House of Justice), the authors conclude that much of this remarkable prophetic passage has, in fact, already come to pass: ‘While it will be decades – or perhaps a great deal longer – before the vision contained in this remarkable document is fully realized, the essential features of what it promised are now established facts throughout the world’.⁹⁵

12. Unity in the Political Realm (*vahdat-i siyāsat*): ‘Abdu’l-Baha’s vision of the future, based the prescience of insight and foresight, begins with a prediction of political unity: ‘The first candle is unity in the political realm (*vahdat-i siyāsat*), the early glimmerings of which can now be discerned’.⁹⁶ This first ‘candle of unity’ is ‘a unity which politically independent and

sovereign states achieve among themselves'.⁹⁷ In *Century of Light*, the authors note that political unity was institutionally realized in the establishment of the United Nations: 'As to "unity in the political realm", Shoghi Effendi has explained that the reference is to unity which sovereign states achieve among themselves, a developing process the present stage of which is the establishment of the United Nations'.⁹⁸ The UN is far from perfect, but its formation was a landmark achievement.

13. Unity of Thought (*vaḥdat-i ārā*): The next global development foreseen by 'Abdu'l-Baha is that of international cooperation: 'The second candle is unity of thought (*vaḥdat-i ārā*) in world undertakings, the consummation of which will ere long be witnessed'.⁹⁹ The authors of *Century of Light* observe that this prediction, for the most part, has already taken place: "'Unity of thought in world undertakings", a concept for which the most idealistic aspirations at the opening of the twentieth century lacked even reference points, is also in large measure everywhere apparent in vast programmes of social and economic development, humanitarian aid and concern for protection of the environment of the planet and its oceans'.¹⁰⁰ Thus this part of 'Abdu'l-Baha's vision is largely realized as well.

14. Unity in Freedom (*vaḥdat-i āzādī*): 'Abdu'l-Baha's next predicate, in the form of a prediction, is the burgeoning desire for freedom and independence and national self-determination worldwide: 'The third candle is unity in freedom (*vaḥdat-i āzādī*) which will surely come to pass'.¹⁰¹ In *Century of Light*, the authors note that this urge to freedom is now a global phenomenon: "'Unity in freedom" has today, of course, become a universal aspiration of the Earth's inhabitants.' The authors point to the end of the colonial era and the various freedom movements that have since arisen: 'Among the chief developments giving substance to it, the Master may well have had in mind the dramatic extinction of colonialism and the consequent rise of self-determination as a dominant feature of national identity at century's end'.¹⁰² By and large, this aspect of 'Abdu'l-Baha's vision has been fulfilled as well.

15. Unity in Religion (*vaḥdat-i dīnī*): 'Abdu'l-Baha next writes of unity in religion: 'The fourth candle is unity in religion (*vaḥdat-i dīnī*) which is the corner-stone of the foundation itself, and which, by the power of God, will be revealed in all its splendour'.¹⁰³ (This principle is closely related to principle #1 above.) In *Century of Light*, the authors indicate that the world has witnessed great progress insofar as unity of religion is concerned: 'In several of the great changes envisioned – unity of race and unity of religion – the intent of the Master's words is clear and the processes involved are far advanced, however great may be the resistance in some quarters'.¹⁰⁴

The 'process' spoken of here appears to be a growing appreciation of the quintessential unity of religions, as Shoghi Effendi has said: 'He is happy to hear of your great devotion to the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh and how clearly you have grasped the fundamental truth that all the Prophets are from One Essence and one in spirit. This is one of the greatest blessings the Faith has to offer to people – the knowledge of the unity of all religions'.¹⁰⁵

The reference here appears to be primarily about harmony among religions, in the context of religious pluralism, through the abolition of religious prejudices, and, secondarily, to unity within religion, that is, within the Baha'i religion. While those who embrace the Baha'i Faith hail from all religious backgrounds and experience intra-religious unity, the purpose of

the Baha'i religion is to promote unity, both within and without. Teaching the fundamental harmony of all religions serves to foster interfaith reciprocity.

16. Unity of Nations (*vahdat-i vaṭān*): 'Abdu'l-Baha gives assurance of the eventual unity of nations, which is distinct from political unity: 'The fifth candle is the unity of nations (*vahdat-i vaṭān*) – a unity which in this century¹⁰⁶ will be securely established, causing all the peoples of the world to regard themselves as citizens of one common fatherland.'¹⁰⁷ This fifth 'candle of unity', according to Shoghi Effendi, 'is one which is brought about between nations, the difference between a state and a nation being that the former, as you know, is a political entity without necessarily being homogeneous in race, whereas the second implies national as well as political homogeneity'.¹⁰⁸

After referring to Shoghi Effendi's statement just cited, the authors of *Century of Light* note that this prediction of 'Abdu'l-Baha is progressively becoming a social reality: 'The Master's promise of "unity of nations", on the other hand, looked forward to today's widespread acceptance among the peoples of the world of the fact that, however great the differences among them may be, they are the inhabitants of a single global homeland'.¹⁰⁹

17. Unity of Races (*vahdat-i jins*): 'The sixth candle is unity of races (*vahdat-i jins*), making of all that dwell on earth peoples and kindreds of one race'.¹¹⁰ Elsewhere, 'Abdu'l-Baha urges the Baha'is to perfect their unity, irregardless of race or ethnicity, so that the Baha'i community can offer a living model of unity that transcends such superficial distinctions:

Strive with heart and soul in order to bring about union and harmony among the white and the black and prove thereby the unity (*vahdat*) of the Bahá'í world wherein distinction of colour findeth no place, but where hearts only are considered. Praise be to God, the hearts of the friends are united and linked together, whether they be from the east or the west, from north or from south, whether they be German, French, Japanese, American, and whether they pertain to the white, the black, the red, the yellow or the brown race. Variations of colour, of land and of race are of no importance in the Bahá'í Faith; on the contrary, Bahá'í unity overcometh them all and doeth away with all these fancies and imaginations.¹¹¹

In *Century of Light*, the authors comment that 'the processes involved' in the 'unity of race' are 'far advanced'.¹¹²

18. Unity of Language (*vahdat-i lisān*): 'The seventh candle is unity of language (*vahdat-i lisān*), i.e., the choice of a universal tongue in which all peoples will be instructed and converse'.¹¹³ In *Century of Light*, the authors observe that 'the processes involved' in achieving 'unity of language' are 'far advanced' while the need for formal adoption of a universal auxiliary language remains:

The need for it is now recognized on all sides, as reflected in the circumstances that have compelled the United Nations and much of the non-governmental community to adopt several 'official languages'. Until a decision is taken by international agreement, the effect of such developments as the Internet, the management of air traffic, the development of technological vocabularies of

various kinds, and universal education itself, has been to make it possible, to some extent, for English to fill the gap.¹¹⁴

Whether or not English emerges not only as the *de facto* international language, but one by universal acclaim, remains to be seen.

XI. Types of Unity as Defined by ‘Abdu’l-Baha: Other Types of Unity

19. Unity of All Mankind/World Unity (*ittifāq-i kull va ittihād-i ‘umūm*): The overarching principle of Baha’i teachings is the consciousness of the oneness of humankind: ‘Hence the unity of all mankind (*ittifāq-i kull va ittihād-i ‘umūm*) can in this day be achieved. Verily this is none other but one of the wonders of this wondrous age, this glorious century’.¹¹⁵ Commenting on this principle, Shoghi Effendi states that world unity is the next stage in the world’s social evolution: ‘Unification of the whole of mankind is the hall-mark of the stage which human society is now approaching’.¹¹⁶ ‘Up to the present Unity of Mankind was only of an academic importance,’ Shoghi Effendi elsewhere states, ‘Now it is becoming more and more a subject for international statesmen to think of. ... It is therefore a wonderful chance for us to come to the front and expound the teaching which is the goal and aim of the social precepts of Bahá’u’lláh’.¹¹⁷

20. Unity of Species: Appeals to nature are commonly met with in ‘Abdu’l-Baha’s discourse. This is one example, from ‘Abdu’l-Baha’s Howard University speech in Rankin Chapel on 23 April 1912:

Often a white dove soars aloft with a black one. Throughout the animal kingdom we do not find the creatures separated because of color. They recognize unity of species and oneness of kind. If we do not find color distinction drawn in a kingdom of lower intelligence and reason, how can it be justified among human beings, especially when we know that all have come from the same source and belong to the same household? In origin and intention of creation mankind is one. Distinctions of race and color have arisen afterward.¹¹⁸

Although the Persian original of this historically poignant speech is available, with every likelihood that this Persian text accurately represents the speech verbatim, vol. 2 of *Khiṭābāt* was not directly authenticated by ‘Abdu’l-Baha and therefore may not be authoritative (although Shoghi Effendi quotes this passage with approval, and most Persian Baha’is regard Vol. 2 as authoritative).¹¹⁹ Fortunately, there are authoritative texts that convey the same idea, such as this: ‘But the docile, good-natured and gentle animals, whether they belong to the flying or grazing species, associate with one another in complete affinity, united in their flocks, and living their lives with enjoyment, happiness and contentment’.¹²⁰ While ‘unity of species’ is not a positive Baha’i principle of unity that can be put into practice, this appeal to the animal kingdom (which, as stated, draws no distinction as to colour) is calculated to elevate prejudice-ridden mindsets from what is essentially an animalistic tendency, yet one which finds no counterpart in the natural world as to racial distinctions.

21. Unity of Truth (*vaḥdat-i ḥaqīqat*): The reality of the human predicament and its solution, from the Baha’i perspective, will become increasingly

obvious as the world – impelled by the forces of its social evolution – advances ever closer to its inevitable integration. With confidence, ‘Abdu’l-Baha expresses hope that ‘the unity of truth (*vaḥdat-i ḥaqīqat*), through the power of God, will make these illusory differences to vanish away’, such that, over time, truth becomes self-evident. Truth is seen as a necessary adjunct of unity, largely because disunity is the outcome of illusion, such as the pernicious notions of racial, national or religious superiority. ‘This is the one essential’, ‘Abdu’l-Baha goes on to say, ‘for if unity be gained, all other problems will disappear of themselves’.¹²¹

22. Unity of Conscience (*vaḥdat-i vujdān*): The question of peace requires ‘unity of conscience’ in reaching consensus:

There is not one soul whose conscience does not testify that in this day there is no more important matter in the world than that of universal peace. ... Until the minds of men become united, no important matter can be accomplished. At present universal peace is a matter of great importance, but unity of conscience (*vaḥdat-i vujdān*) is essential. ... Therefore Bahá’u’lláh, fifty years ago, expounded this question of universal peace at a time when He was confined in the fortress of ‘Akká and was wronged and imprisoned.¹²²

Freedom of conscience is a related Baha’i principle, but, here, the need for consensus on matters of world-historical importance is stressed.

23. All-Unifying Power (*jihat-i jāmi’ih*): While a departure from the terminology used so far, the Baha’i concept of an ‘All-Unifying Power’ is important, as it conveys the source of authority – and the unity and integrity – of the Baha’i community itself. In the Tablet to August Forel, Swiss scientist (1848–1931), ‘Abdu’l-Baha, in setting forth a logical proof of the existence of God, writes of the ‘all-unifying agency (*jihat-i jāmi’ih*) known as the human soul’,¹²³ and analogizes this to God as the ‘all-unifying Power (*jihat-i jāmi’ih*)’ of the universe, which agencies operate to ‘connect and harmonize these diverse and infinite realities’.¹²⁴ Elsewhere, in *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, after speaking of various kinds of ‘collective centers’ (an alternative translation to ‘All-Unifying Power’) – patriotism, nationalism, identity of interests, political alliance, union of ideals, etc. – ‘Abdu’l-Baha writes of the Baha’i ‘Collective Center’ that embodies its institutions and teachings:

But the Collective Center (*jihat-i jāmi’ih*) of the Kingdom, embodying the institutions and divine teachings, is the eternal Collective Center. It establishes a relationship between the East and the West, organizes the oneness of the world of humanity, and destroys the foundation of differences. ... Consequently, the real Collective Center is the body of the divine teachings, which include all the degrees and embrace all the universal relations and necessary laws of humanity.¹²⁵

A synonym for ‘Collective Center’ would be the Baha’i ‘Covenant’, a term that adumbrates fidelity to the authority of the Baha’i ‘Central Figures’ (the Bab, Baha’u’llah, ‘Abdu’l-Baha), the Baha’i institutions (The Guardianship, i.e. Shoghi Effendi as ‘The Guardian of the Cause of God’, the Universal House of Justice, national, regional and local spiritual assemblies), and Baha’i laws and ethics.

24. Unity of Science and Religion (*vaḥdat-i 'ilm va dīn*): The harmony and complementarity of science and religion is a bedrock principle of Baha'i belief:

For every era hath a spirit; the spirit of this illumined era lieth in the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. ... They are founded upon the unity of science and religion (*vaḥdat-i 'ilm va dīn*) and upon investigation of truth. They uphold the principle that religion must be the cause of amity, union and harmony among men. They establish the equality of both sexes and propound economic principles which are for the happiness of individuals. They diffuse universal education, that every soul may as much as possible have a share of knowledge. They abrogate and nullify religious, racial, political, patriotic and economic prejudices and the like. Those teachings that are scattered throughout the Epistles and Tablets are the cause of the illumination and the life of the world of humanity.¹²⁶

Given that these are among the most important of Baha'i principles, privileging the 'unity of science and religion (*vaḥdat-i 'ilm va dīn*)' is noteworthy, if not remarkable, given the fact that the Baha'i religion appears to be the only religion that has adopted this principle as a core belief. As with religion, the purpose of science is to further the unity and progress of the human race, as Baha'u'llah states: 'O people of Bahá! The source of crafts, sciences and arts is the power of reflection. Make ye every effort that out of this ideal mine there may gleam forth such pearls of wisdom and utterance as will promote the well-being and harmony of all the kindreds of the earth'.

25. Unity of the Rights of Men and Women (*vaḥdat-i huqūq-i rijāl va nisā'*): In the passage cited above, 'equality of both sexes', that is, gender equality, is presented by 'Abdu'l-Baha as one of the foremost principles of Baha'i precept and praxis. This same teaching is commonly met with in other passages, such as this:

Bahá'u'lláh proclaimed equality of the sexes (literally, 'oneness of the rights of men and women' (*vaḥdat-i huqūq-i rijāl va nisā'*)) – that both man and woman are servants of God before Whom there is no distinction. ... Equality of the sexes will be established in proportion to the increased opportunities afforded woman in this age, for man and woman are equally the recipients of powers and endowments from God, the Creator. God has not ordained distinction between them in His consummate purpose.¹²⁷

Here, the teaching that men and women are equal is shorthand for their equality of rights and opportunities, although differences between the sexes tend to be de-emphasized in Baha'i discourse, especially as regards the education of boys and girls. Education, in fact, is seen as the single most pragmatic and direct approach in promoting gender equality. 'He promulgated the adoption of the same course of education for man and woman', 'Abdu'l-Baha proclaimed. 'Daughters and sons must follow the same curriculum of study, thereby promoting unity of the sexes'.¹²⁸ 'Abdu'l-Baha goes on to say that the education of women will be the single greatest factor in the abolition of war.

26. Unity in Education (*vaḥdat-i uṣūl va qavānīn-i tarbiyat*): Universal compulsory education is another core Baha'i belief, and the curriculum must be the same, irrespective of gender, according to 'Abdu'l-Baha:

Eighth, education is essential, and all standards of training and teaching (*vahdat-i usūl va qavānīn-i tarbiyat*) throughout the world of mankind should be brought into conformity and agreement; a universal curriculum (*tarbiyat-i vāhidīh*) should be established, and the basis of ethics be the same (*yik usūl va adab*).¹²⁹

There is a direct relationship between this Baha'i principle of unity and the preceding one: 'He promulgated the adoption of the same (*vahdat*) course of education for man and woman. Daughters and sons must follow the same curriculum of study, thereby promoting unity (*ittihād*) of the sexes', 'Abdu'l-Baha declares, with the result that: 'When all mankind shall receive the same opportunity of education and the equality (*vahdat*) of men and women be realized, the foundations of war will be utterly destroyed'.¹³⁰

The source on which this Baha'i principle of unity is based requires some explanation, which will raise an important issue regarding the methodology of the present study. Every effort has been made to validate each of the Baha'i principles of unity in an authenticated original Persian or Arabic text, except for the several Baha'i principles of unity that were articulated by Shoghi Effendi in English as the original language (*infra*). A collection of the Persian speeches by 'Abdu'l-Baha delivered in Europe, America and Canada from 1911 to 1913 was published in *Majmū'ih-yi Khitābāt Ḥadrat-i 'Abdu'l-Bahā fī Ūrūpā va Āmrīkā* (hereafter, *Khitābāt*; 'Collected Talks of 'Abdu'l-Baha in Europe and America'). Volume 1 was published with 'Abdu'l-Baha's approval,¹³¹ whereas volumes 2 and 3 have not been similarly authenticated, although their reliability is certainly superior to the stenographic notes that were set down in English as a result of contemporaneous translation. Thus any of these Baha'i principles of unity that invoke volumes 2 or 3 of *Khitābāt* require additional attestation, although the prevailing assumption by Persian-speaking Baha'is is that these texts are authentic and thus authoritative.¹³²

Fortunately, a number of authenticated texts directly bear on the Baha'i principle of 'unity in education', although not necessarily using that particular expression. One example will suffice: 'Ignorance is thus utterly to be blamed, whether in male or female; indeed, in the female its harm is greater. I hope, therefore, that the friends will make strenuous efforts to educate their children, sons and daughters alike'.¹³³

27. Unity of Husband and Wife: Although this is a separate principle, unity of husband and wife is capable of fulfilment if true equality exists between husband and wife, and if that unity is spiritual as well as physical: 'Among the people of Bahá, however, marriage must be a union of the body and of the spirit as well, ... for if the marriage is based both on the spirit and the body, that union (*vahdat*) is a true one, hence it will endure'.¹³⁴

28. Unity of the Family (*ittihād va ittifāq dar miyān-i khāndān*): In a Baha'i perspective, the family is considered the fundamental unit of society: 'Bahá'u'lláh came to bring unity to the world, and a fundamental unity is that of the family'.¹³⁵ If society is an aggregate of families, then family unity is an index of social cohesion. 'Note ye how easily, where unity existeth in a given family (*ittihād va ittifāq dar miyān-i khāndān*), the affairs of that family are conducted', 'Abdu'l-Baha observes, 'what progress the members of that family make, how they prosper in the world'.¹³⁶

29. Baha'i Unity (*vahdat-i Bahā'ī*): Moving from the family to the local community, the integrity of the Baha'i community is maintained through

the power of 'the Covenant', which is adherence to decisions promulgated by the elected institutions: 'Do not disrupt Bahá'í unity (*vahdat-i Bahā'ī*), and know that this unity cannot be maintained save through faith in the Covenant of God'.¹³⁷ 'Abdu'l-Baha gives assurances that the Baha'i model of unity will attract the world at large if Baha'i ideals are authentically put into practice and become a lived reality. 'If once the beauty of the unity (*vahdat*) of the friends – this Divine Beloved – be decked in the adornments of the Abhá Kingdom', 'Abdu'l-Baha assures us, 'it is certain that within a very short time those countries will become the Paradise of the All-Glorious, and that out of the west the splendours of unity will cast their bright rays over all the earth'.¹³⁸

Moral authenticity is needed before Baha'i ideals can be respected and taken seriously by the world at large:

Today the one overriding need is unity and harmony (*ittihād va ittifāq-i aḥibbā-yi ilāhī*) among the beloved of the Lord, for they should have among them but one heart and soul (*yik dil va yik jān*) and should, so far as in them lieth, unitedly withstand the hostility of all the peoples of the world (*ahl-i 'ālam*); they must bring to an end the benighted prejudices of all nations and religions and must make known to every member of the human race that all are the leaves of one branch, the fruits of one bough. Until such time, however, as the friends establish perfect unity (*ittihād va ittifāq*) among themselves, how can they summon others to harmony and peace (*ittihād va ittifāq*)?¹³⁹

This dynamic relationship between internal and external unity is reinforced, time and again, in the Baha'i writings. 'Today the most remarkable favour of God centereth around union and harmony (*ittihād va ittifāq*) among the friends', 'Abdu'l-Baha explains, 'so that this unity and concord (*ittihād va ittifāq*) may be the cause (*sabab*) of the promulgation of the oneness of the world of humanity (*vahdat-i 'ālam-i insānī*), may emancipate the world from this intense darkness of enmity and rancour, and that the Sun of Truth may shine in full and perfect effulgence'.¹⁴⁰ The world needs an exemplary community as a model of unity, and the Baha'i community endeavours to live up to its ideals of harmonious and progressive social life.

30. Unity among Baha'i Women: While this Baha'i principle of unity may be considered to be a subset of the previous one, 'Abdu'l-Baha exhorts the 'spreading the spirit of unity among His handmaids'¹⁴¹ as a worthy endeavour with its own intrinsic value. This text is authenticated, and finds further support in several 'reported utterances' much in the same vein. 'The news concerning the unity, harmony, affinity and oneness of the maid-servants of the Merciful One and the friends of God in those parts, imparted the utmost joy and happiness (to me),' 'Abdu'l-Baha exclaimed. 'This indicated that the Cause will before long yield results in that country'.¹⁴²

31. Unity of Emotions (*iḥsāsāt-i vāḥidih*): In a talk given on the morning of 9 June 1912 at the Unitarian Church, Fifteenth Street and Girard Avenue, in Philadelphia, 'Abdu'l-Baha ends his speech with this prediction: 'All will become as one family, one people, and the same susceptibility to the divine bounty and education will be witnessed among mankind'.¹⁴³ A Persian transcription for this speech exists. In the Persian original, in a single sentence, 'Abdu'l-Baha enumerates seven types of unity: (1) One Family

(*'iyāl-yi vāḥidih*); (2) One Nation (*millat-i vāḥidih*); (3) One People (*jins-i vāḥid*); (4) One Nation/Homeland (*vatan-i vāḥid*); (5) One Political System (*siyāsat-i vāḥid*); (6) Oneness of Emotions (*iḥsāsāt-i vāḥidih*); (7) Oneness of Education (*tarbiyat-i vāḥidih*).¹⁴⁴ This statement is remarkable for its rhetorical stress on the importance of social cohesion at every level of society which are, at any rate, interrelated.

32. Unity of the Nations/International Unity (*vahdat-i 'ālam-i insānī*): 'Today the world of humanity is in need of international unity (*vahdat*) and conciliation (*vahdat-i 'ālam-i insānī*)'.¹⁴⁵ Although there is a Persian original for this statement, volume 2 of *Khīṭābāt* is not authenticated and therefore not necessarily authoritative, as noted above. There are authoritative texts that convey the same idea, conveying the teaching that, once 'the oneness of the world of humanity' is accepted worldwide, then 'peace and universal reconciliation' will come to pass, such that 'the pavilion of the unity of nations may cast its shadow over all regions'.¹⁴⁶

33. Unity of the Spiritual Assembly: Just as each Baha'i community should be united and supportive of the elected local spiritual assembly (Baha'i consultative council), the members of that institution itself should be united, as their efficacy depends upon it. 'The first condition is absolute love and harmony amongst the members of the assembly', 'Abdu'l-Baha counsels, adding: 'They must be wholly free from estrangement and must manifest in themselves the Unity (*yigānigī*) of God'.¹⁴⁷

34. Unity of The Universal House of Justice and Governments: The Baha'i community is administered by elected councils at the local, national and international levels. The supreme Baha'i institution is the Universal House of Justice, first elected in April 1963 at the Baha'i World Centre in Haifa, Israel. The Baha'i administrative order aspires not only to serve as a well-functioning administrative order, but also to evolve into a model of good governance. Thus, if and when Baha'is reach a majority in any given country, the will of the majority would be to turn that model of good governance into an institution of the government. This would only happen as the result of a democratic and evolutionary process, and the rights of non-Baha'i minorities would be respected and safeguarded as a matter of principle and as an ethic of justice. Long before the Universal House of Justice came into actual existence, it was originally conceived by Baha'u'llah and elaborated on by 'Abdu'l-Baha, who stated that the future House of Justice and Baha'i governments must cooperate with ideal harmony in applying Baha'i principles of justice:

And now, concerning the House of Justice which God hath ordained as the source of all good and freed from all error, it must be elected by universal suffrage, that is, by the believers. ... This House of Justice enacteth the laws and the government enforceth them. The legislative body must reinforce the executive, the executive must aid and assist the legislative body so that through the close union and harmony (*irtibāt va iltiyām*, literally, 'affinity'¹⁴⁸ and conciliation'¹⁴⁹) of these two forces (*īn du qūvat*), the foundation of fairness and justice may become firm and strong, that all the regions of the world may become even as Paradise itself.¹⁵⁰

Here, the principle of intra-governmental coordination serves as a complement of international cooperation, where a unified system is advocated, both

in constitutive structure and in operational functioning. Justice is a necessary precondition of unity, as Baha'u'llah writes, the 'Words of Paradise':

The word of God which the Supreme Pen hath recorded on the sixth leaf of the Most Exalted Paradise is the following: The light of men is Justice. Quench it not with the contrary winds of oppression and tyranny. The purpose of justice is the appearance of unity among men. The ocean of divine wisdom surgeth within this exalted word, while the books of the world cannot contain its inner significance.¹⁵¹

XII. Types of Unity Articulated by Shoghi Effendi: Foundations of Baha'i Administration and the Future World Commonwealth

35. Unity in Diversity: The types of unity that follow focus primarily on the foundations of the Baha'i administrative order, and on the future world commonwealth (i.e. Baha'i model of good governance expected to exert a positive influence on a future global civilization). 'For the bedrock of the Bahá'í administrative order is the principle of unity in diversity', Shoghi Effendi stresses, 'which has been so strongly and so repeatedly emphasized in the writings of the Cause'.¹⁵² While a commonplace catchphrase today, 'unity in diversity' remains a watchword in the Baha'i community.

36. Unity of the Baha'i Revelation: Baha'u'llah was preceded by a religious figure, known as the Bab, a spiritual title meaning 'the Gate' (1819–50). Parallel to John the Baptist in relation to Jesus Christ, the Bab prepared his followers for the advent of Baha'u'llah and, in the process, revealed a considerable body of religious texts that ought to be considered as Baha'i scripture: 'Shoghi Effendi feels that the unity of the Bahá'í revelation as one complete whole embracing the Faith of the Báb should be emphasised'.¹⁵³ Thus the Bab is considered the 'Co-founder'¹⁵⁴ of the Baha'i religion, historically, doctrinally and legislatively (to the extent that certain laws of the Bab have been adopted, in modified form, in Baha'i praxis).

37. Unity of Doctrine: 'Doctrinal unity and administrative unity, these are the two chief pillars that sustain the edifice of the Cause', writes Shoghi Effendi, 'and protect it from the storms of opposition which so severely rage against it'.¹⁵⁵

38. Unity of Administration: The unity and integrity of the Baha'i administrative order is considered to be divinely inspired in its essential features and is therefore highly valued. Shoghi Effendi urges Baha'is to 'maintain the unity of the administrative order' along with 'the unity of the believers'.¹⁵⁶ 'Differences which are not fundamental and contrary to the basic teachings of the Cause should be maintained', Shoghi Effendi goes on to say, 'while the underlying unity of the administrative order should be at any cost preserved and insured'.¹⁵⁷

39. Evolving Social Unities: Underlying the future golden age of world civilization that the Baha'i writings envision is a theory of social evolution, where civilization advances throughout history in a progressive series of widening circles of unity, as Shoghi Effendi has framed it:

Unification of the whole of mankind is the hall-mark of the stage which human society is now approaching. Unity of family, of tribe, of city-state, and nation have been successively attempted and fully established. World unity is

the goal towards which a harassed humanity is striving. Nation-building has come to an end.¹⁵⁸

Thus, 'unity of family', 'unity of tribe', 'unity of city-state' and 'unity of nation' are evolutionary stages in social evolution, culminating, in due course, in a world civilization, described below.

40. Unity of the World Commonwealth: The preceding Baha'i principles of unity are teleological, in that they synchronically and synergistically aim to hasten the day in which the world commonwealth, as envisaged in the Baha'i writings, emerge, and the future golden age of world civilization will come into fruition:

The unity of the human race, as envisaged by Bahá'u'lláh, implies the establishment of a world commonwealth in which all nations, races, creeds and classes are closely and permanently united, and in which the autonomy of its state members and the personal freedom and initiative of the individuals that compose them are definitely and completely safeguarded. ... A world executive, backed by an international Force, will carry out the decisions arrived at, and apply the laws enacted by, this world legislature, and will safeguard the organic unity of the whole commonwealth.¹⁵⁹

XIII. Other Unities

Other types of unity round out this preliminary survey. What follows is a sampling of various exhortations and rhetorical expressions, all aimed at reinforcing the Baha'i focus on unity socially and administratively in all aspects of Baha'i thought and life.

41. Mystic Unity of God and His Manifestations: 'Abdu'l-Baha was charismatic and, without any intention to do so, attracted some followers who variously thought him to be the return of Christ or to share the powers of Baha'u'llah, etc. In the course of addressing the error of such views, Shoghi Effendi wrote of the 'the mystic unity of God and His Manifestations':

Moreover, to maintain that the assertion 'He is Myself', instead of denoting the mystic unity of God and His Manifestations (*vahdat-i ma'naviyih-yi mazāhir-i ilāhiyah*), as explained in the *Kitáb-i Íqán*, establishes the identity of Bahá'u'lláh with 'Abdu'l-Bahá, would constitute a direct violation of the oft-repeated principle of the oneness of God's Manifestations – a principle which the Author of these same extracts is seeking by implication to emphasize.¹⁶⁰

The 'mystic unity of God and His Manifestations' expresses a vertical relationship, whereas 'the oneness of God's Manifestations' (represented in principle #9, *supra*) is horizontal in nature. This subtle distinction is incidental to the main point, which is that 'Abdu'l-Baha is not a prophet or, in the Baha'i term of art, a 'Manifestation of God'.

42. Unity of Meaning: Historically, many schisms in other religions were precipitated by disagreements over the purport and application of various scriptural texts. Not so in the Baha'i context. Taken together, the Baha'i scriptures constitute a considerable corpus of authoritative religious texts. They are accepted as infused and imbued with a perfectly consistent gist: 'In attempting to understand the Writings, therefore, one must first realize

that there is and can be no real contradiction in them, and in the light of this we can confidently seek the unity of meaning which they contain'.¹⁶¹ While 'unity of meaning' is not a term commonly met with in Baha'i discourse, the principle for which it stands is universally accepted and adhered to within the Baha'i community at large.

43. Unity of Doctrine: A necessary corollary of scriptural integrity is doctrinal integrity, which is safeguarded by an established set of primary sources with a clear line of interpretive authority, acting as a bulwark against schism – a typically irreversible problem that has caused other world religions to be fragmented, often with serious tensions or even antagonisms. On this, the Universal House of Justice has stated: 'Unity of doctrine is maintained by the existence of the authentic texts of Scripture and the voluminous interpretations of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi, together with the absolute prohibition against anyone propounding "authoritative" or "inspired" interpretations or usurping the function of the Guardian'.¹⁶² With such lines of authority being clear and unambiguous, there is room for diversity of private understanding and personal elucidations that may be offered.

44. Mystic Unity of Soul with God: This principle is exemplified in the following text:

The universal crisis affecting mankind is, therefore, essentially spiritual in its causes. ... It is this condition, so sadly morbid, into which society has fallen, that religion seeks to improve and transform. For the core of religious faith is that mystic feeling which unites Man with God. This state of spiritual communion can be brought about and maintained by means of meditation and prayer. ... The Bahá'í Faith, like all other Divine Religions, is thus fundamentally mystic in character. Its chief goal is the development of the individual and society, through the acquisition of spiritual virtues and powers. It is the soul of man which has first to be fed.¹⁶³

45. Unity of Vision: The next few Baha'i principles of unity are pragmatic. Vision precedes action. Shared vision is necessary for forming a collective plan of action. The Universal House of Justice employs the expression, 'unity of vision' in the context of 'systematic action'. Speaking of the 'requirements of systematic action in advancing the process of entry by troops' (i.e. attracting significant numbers of new Baha'is), the Universal House of Justice stresses the strategic importance of conducting Baha'i 'reflection meetings' at the local 'cluster' level, in which 'participatory discussions' serve 'to maintain *unity of vision*, sharpen clarity of thought and heighten enthusiasm'.¹⁶⁴

46. Unity of Action: Once 'unity of vision' is reached, 'unity of action' follows. This Baha'i principle of unity is to be distinguished from 'Unity of (Ritual) Acts' (principle #3, *supra*). As to the observance of Baha'i feasts and holy days, Shoghi Effendi wrote:

Unity of action, in matters of so vital an importance as the observance of Bahá'í holidays, is essential. It is the responsibility of the NSA to remind and urge the friends to faithfully carry out all such laws and precepts of the Cause, the enforcement of which does not constitute an open violation of the laws of their country.¹⁶⁵

Today, unity of action is even more essential for the current emphasis on systematic action involving worldwide ‘coherence’ in furthering the collective interests of the Baha’i Faith in its efforts to significantly grow in size and in its leavening influence in wider societies. ‘Unity of action’ is not only important within the Baha’i community, but has implications for the world at large, as indicated by the Baha’i International Community, which is an international agency that officially represents the Universal House of Justice in published statements on various issues of international concern, such as in the statement regarding ‘unity of thought and action’ in the pursuit of justice:

Justice is the one power that can translate the dawning consciousness of humanity’s oneness into a collective will through which the necessary structures of global community life can be confidently erected. An age that sees the people of the world increasingly gaining access to information of every kind and to a diversity of ideas will find justice asserting itself as the ruling principle of successful social organization. With ever greater frequency, proposals aiming at the development of the planet will have to submit to the candid light of the standards it requires. ...

At the group level, a concern for justice is the indispensable compass in collective decision making, because it is the only means by which *unity of thought and action* can be achieved.¹⁶⁶

This language reflects such exhortations by Shoghi Effendi as in his 1928 call ‘that a concerted effort be made and a unity in thought and action be obtained’¹⁶⁷ and in his 1948 cablegram, ‘URGE UTMOST UNITY ENERGETIC ACTION’.¹⁶⁸ This principle complements the ‘second candle’ of the ‘Seven Candles of Unity’ (presented above), which is ‘unity of thought in world undertakings’.¹⁶⁹ Thus there should be agreement both within the Baha’i community and as well as in international undertakings, be they scientific, medical, economic, environmental, political or otherwise.

47. Unity of Purpose: ‘With unity of purpose firmly established in our minds, with every trace of personal animosity banished from our hearts, and with the spirit of whole-hearted and sustained fellowship kindled in our souls’, Shoghi Effendi counsels, ‘can we hope to deliver effectively the Message of Bahá’u’lláh, and execute faithfully the various provisions of our Beloved’s Will and Testament’.¹⁷⁰ And further, Shoghi Effendi urges ‘unity of purpose and action’ in order to ‘form one united front and combat, wisely and tactfully, every force that might darken the spirit of the Movement, cause division in its ranks, and narrow it by dogmatic and sectarian belief’.¹⁷¹ Disunity, i.e. internal disagreements, will result in a faith community at cross-purposes with itself. Unity within the Baha’i community is a paramount concern, and is expressed in terms of remaining faithful to the Baha’i ‘Covenant’, which mandates that the Baha’i community supports the institutions (i.e. the Universal House of Justice, along with national and local spiritual assemblies) that were brought into existence by Baha’u’llah and ‘Abdu’l-Baha, and which the Baha’is themselves democratically elect.

48. Unity of Means: Closely related to unity of purpose is the process of accomplishing that purpose, i.e. 'unity of means'. 'Unity, both of purpose and of means', Shoghi Effendi explains, 'is, indeed, indispensable to the safe and speedy working of every Assembly, whether local or national'.¹⁷² This is an emphasis on congruence and coherence in effectively carrying out administrative tasks.

49. Unity with the Environment: This Baha'i principle of unity in the present survey departs slightly from the criterion for inclusion that the principle is explicitly expressed as a 'unity' or 'oneness', etc. Former Vice-President Al Gore, quotes Shoghi Effendi to the effect that humanity and nature are inseparable and exert reciprocal influence, one upon the other:

One of the newest of the great universalist religions, Baha'i, founded in 1863 in Persia by Mirza Husayn Ali [Baha'u'llah], warns us not only to properly regard the relationship between humankind and nature but also the one between civilization and the environment. Perhaps because its guiding visions were formed during the period of accelerating industrialism, Baha'i seems to dwell on the spiritual implications of the great transformation to which it bore fresh witness: 'We cannot segregate the human heart from the environment outside us and say that once one of these is reformed everything will be improved. Man is organic with the world. His inner life molds the environment and is itself deeply affected by it. The one acts upon the other and every abiding change in the life of man is the result of these mutual reactions'.¹⁷³

This application of the Baha'i emphasis on unity to environmental concerns demonstrates the integrative nature of the Baha'i worldview, in that any concerted effort to address environmental concerns necessarily should presuppose a dynamic interplay, or 'mutuality', between humanity, in terms of its spiritual conscience, and the physical world.

50. Unity of the Free: Baha'i texts distinguish between 'true liberty' (i.e. freedom within the bounds of propriety and moderation) and unbridled libertarianism that, in its extreme form, can slip into anarchy. The Universal House of Justice has developed this reasoning in a message that will be quoted at some length, so that the reader can better follow it:

The spirit of liberty which in recent decades has swept over the planet with such tempestuous force is a manifestation of the vibrancy of the Revelation brought by Bahá'u'lláh. His own words confirm it. 'The Ancient Beauty', He wrote in a soul-stirring commentary on His sufferings, 'hath consented to be bound with chains that mankind may be released from its bondage, and hath accepted to be made a prisoner within this most mighty Stronghold that the whole world may attain unto true liberty'. ...

Consider what Bahá'u'lláh has done: He revealed laws and principles to guide the free, He established an Order to channel the actions of the free, He proclaimed a Covenant to guarantee the unity of the free.

Thus, we hold to this ultimate perspective: Bahá'u'lláh came to set humanity free. His Revelation is, indeed, an invitation to freedom – freedom from want, freedom from war, freedom to unite, freedom to progress, freedom in peace and joy.¹⁷⁴

'Unity of the free' is closely related to principle #14, 'Unity in Freedom' (i.e. the 'third candle' of the seven candles of unity, recounted above), yet may be distinguished as the reflex of the responsible individual exercise of freedom within a free society, where freedom may be taken to excess and may end up as oppressive to others by impinging on their rights and dignities.

XIV. Conclusions and Recommendations for Further Study

The illness/cure soteriological model in the phenomenology of religions is a useful method for understanding the core paradigms of world religions. This analytic prism commends itself in shedding light on the interior, coherent 'logic' of soteriological paradigms among the various world religions. As applied to the Baha'i Faith, the illness/cure model reveals that, in the Baha'i perspective, the human predicament is estrangement – what the Baha'i poet, Robert Hayden, in his poem, 'American Journal', called 'strangering'¹⁷⁵ – and the 'cure' or social salvation that is offered is that of unity, or harmony, ranging from family relations to race relations to international relations. This is consistent with what Baha'u'llah proclaims as the distinctive contribution of the Baha'i revelation:

O ye that dwell on earth (*ay ahl-i ā'lam*)! The distinguishing feature that marketh the pre-eminent character of this Supreme Revelation (*faḍl īn zuhūr-i a'zam*) consisteth in that We have, on the one hand, blotted out from the pages of God's holy Book whatsoever hath been the cause of strife, of malice and mischief (*sabab-i ikhtilāf va fisāl va nifāq*) amongst the children of men, and have, on the other, laid down the essential prerequisites of concord, of understanding, of complete and enduring unity (*'illat-i ulfat va ittiḥād va ittifāq*). Well is it with them that keep My statutes.¹⁷⁶

And further, this following passage in Arabic uses the illness/cure metaphor, in which the remedy for the body politic is prescribed by the prophet-as-physician, which is basically to restore harmony of all systems and constituents within that collective body:

O ye elected representatives (*aṣḥāb al-majlis*) of the peoples in every land! Take ye counsel together, and let your concern be only for that which profiteth mankind, and bettereth the condition (*ḥāl*) thereof, if ye be of them that scan heedfully. Regard the world (*ā'lam*) as the human body (*kih ḥaykal insān*) which, though at its creation whole and perfect (*ṣaḥīḥ, kāmil*), hath been afflicted, through various causes (*asbāb*), with grave disorders and maladies (*amrāḍ*). ... That which the Lord hath ordained as the sovereign remedy (*al-darīyāq al-a'zam*) and mightiest instrument for the healing (*ṣiḥḥat*) of all the world (*al-arḍ*) is the union (*ittiḥād*) of all its peoples in one universal Cause (*amr wāḥid*), one common Faith (*sharī'a wāḥida*). This can in no wise be achieved except through the power of a skilled, an all-powerful and inspired Physician (*ṭabīb ḥādhiq kāmil mu'ayid*).¹⁷⁷

Here, there is a remarkable congruence between the data and the analytic prism used to study that data. The illness/cure model and the Baha'i texts themselves – where the passage cited above is a perfect exemplar – both

invoke the metaphor of disease and cure, whether individual or social. Extending this medical metaphor could have significant implications in broader contexts, such as the *appropriateness* of the diagnosis, treatment and prognosis by a given religion, which may involve value judgments. It goes without saying that typically a plurality of salvation/liberation theories may coexist within a given world religion. Issues not only of efficacy, but of actual ‘medical malpractice’ at the hands of members of the clergy may be raised, where financial, political, sexual and/or other improprieties may call into question whether any ‘cure’ under review is being administered ethically. Other issues implicated by extending the medical metaphor of the illness/cure framework of analysis may be whether one religious ‘cure’ is appropriate (‘Let the treatment fit the disease’,¹⁷⁸ as the adage goes), or outmoded (where ‘the remedy may change’,¹⁷⁹ as ‘Abdu’l-Baha observes) or where the cure is at the peril of others, in situations where the competing cures are not simply plural approaches, but may impinge on the well-being of each other, as in the case of inter-communal conflict or outright civil war, where religion is a major, aggravating factor, as in present-day Syria and Iraq. But these issues are outside the scope of the present study.

The inventory of Baha’i principles of unity enumerated above – as indicated by selected genitive constructions (i.e. ‘*idāfa* exemplars) involving the Persian/Arabic terms of *ittihād*, *ittifāq*, *ḡigānigī*, *vaḥdat*, *ulfat*, etc. – is by no means exhaustive. However, the number of reiterative searches made to confirm the instant results increases confidence that the present study has identified the majority of Baha’i principles of unity that may be found in the available primary sources.

The principles presented in the present study are *explicit* Baha’i principles of unity. Many other Baha’i teachings may be said to be *implicit* Baha’i principles of unity. The implications for future research are quite clear: once this inventory of explicitly formulated Baha’i principles of unity receives independent attestation, then a typology may be attempted, whether or not that means revisiting Piper’s original typology or devising another classification scheme that appears to naturally emerge from the source material itself. (See note #1, *infra*.)

All of the foregoing Baha’i principles of unity are presented as part of the ‘remedy’ that Baha’u’llah, in his professed role as the ‘Divine Physician’, has prescribed for the healing of the world. ‘[T]he people of religions find, in the teachings of Bahá’u’lláh, the establishment of Universal Religion’, ‘Abdu’l-Baha proclaims, ‘a religion that perfectly conforms with present conditions, which in reality effects the *immediate cure of the incurable disease, which relieves every pain*, and bestows the infallible antidote for every deadly poison’.¹⁸⁰ These principles, each with their own intrinsic worth, synergize and synthesize in the Baha’is’ collective effort – and leavening influence – to unify the world, to establish universal peace, to advance civilization, to promote godliness and virtues, and to deepen the bonds of human fraternity, as ‘Abdu’l-Baha declares:

Direct thine attention to the holy Tablets [of Bahá’u’lláh]; read thou the Ishráqát, Tajallíyyát, the Words of Paradise, the Glad Tidings, the Ṭarázát, the Most Holy Book. Then wilt thou see that today these heavenly Teachings

are *the remedy for a sick and suffering world*, and a healing balm for the sores on the body of mankind. They are the spirit of life, the ark of salvation, the magnet to draw down eternal glory, the dynamic power to motivate the inner self of man.¹⁸¹

And further, in announcing the fulfilment of the prophecies in the Book of Revelation, ‘Abdu’l-Baha has proclaimed, in patently Christian terms, that the Baha’i principles of unity constitute ‘the remedy of true salvation’:

He [Baha’u’llah] is Alpha and Omega. He is the One that will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life and *bestow upon the sick the remedy of true salvation*. He whom such grace aideth is verily he that receiveth the most glorious heritage from the Prophets of God and His holy ones. The Lord will be his God, and he His dearly-beloved son.¹⁸²

Given the Baha’i emphasis on unity, there are many Baha’i teachings that may be characterized as good for the unity of society. The present study, however, has limited its inquiry to those teachings that are expressly characterized as Baha’i principles of unity. This limited scope notwithstanding, the research results are fairly impressive. The fifty (50) Baha’i principles of unity, as outlined above, cover quite a range of social contexts spanning, as previously stated, family relations to international relations.

Space does not permit an explanation as to how each of these teachings are typically put into practice, as that would likely require a separate monograph. Ideally, these Baha’i principles of unity should have a synergistic effect in furthering efforts to achieve social harmony within Baha’i communities and their orbits of influence throughout their locations worldwide – a social laboratory on a global scale. Whether the Baha’i ‘cure’ to the malady of agonistic disunity will be effective, only time will tell. The cure is no easy panacea. Yet the medicine, having been prescribed by Baha’u’llah and further expanded by ‘Abdu’l-Baha, is being put to practice – and thus put to the test of efficacy.¹⁸³

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Contributor details

Christopher Buck (PhD, Study of Religion, University of Toronto, 1996; JD, Cooley Law School, 2006) is a Pennsylvania attorney, independent scholar and part-time professor at Pennsylvania State University. He previously taught at Michigan State University (2000–4), Quincy University (1999–2000), Millikin University (1997–9), and Carleton University (1994–6). Publications: (co-author) *Religious Celebrations: An Encyclopedia of Holidays, Festivals, Solemn Observances, and Spiritual Commemorations* (2011); *Religious Myths and Visions of America: How Minority Faiths Redefined America's World Role* (2009); *Alain Locke: Faith and Philosophy* (2005); *Paradise and Paradigm: Key Symbols in Persian Christianity and the Bahá'í Faith* (1999); *Symbol and Secret:*

Qur'an Commentary in Bahá'u'lláh's Kitáb-i Íqán (1995/2004), various book chapters, journal articles and encyclopaedia articles.

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Endnotes

1. Editor's Note. The protracted nature of publishing this issue has meant that the author has continued to evolve his schema of unity principles. For the latest iteration see '50 Baha'i Principles of Unity: From Individual to International Relations' (10 June 2014) at <http://bahaiteachings.org/50-bahai-principles-of-unity-from-individual-to-international-relations>.
2. The author published a preliminary study in 'Paradise and World Unity in the Baha'i Writings', *Paradise and Paradigm: Key Symbols in Persian Christianity and the Baha'i Faith*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999, 288–311, identifying twenty-two (22 – i.e. 23 less one that was repeated) Baha'i principles of unity. The present study more than doubles that number at fifty (50).
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4. Ibid. 17.
5. Ibid. 17.
6. Stephen Prothero, *God Is Not One: The Eight Rival Religions That Run the World – and Why Their Differences Matter*, San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2010, 14.
7. Ibid. 203.
8. Ibid. 148.
9. Ibid. 169.
10. Ibid. 101, 113.
11. Ibid. 279, 285.
12. Ibid. 243.
13. Ibid. 65, 72.
14. Ibid. 25, 62.
15. Bahá'u'lláh, 'Tablet of Maqṣúd' (*Lawḥ-i Maqṣúd*), *Tablets*, 163–4. Original Persian/Arabic Tablet online at <http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/b/TB/tb-11.html>.
16. Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings From the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1990, 186. Original Persian/Arabic Tablet online at <http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/b/GWB/gwb-131.html>.
17. Bahá'í International Community, *Century of Light*, Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 2006, 42.
18. Bahá'u'lláh, 'Kalimát-i-Firdawsíyyih (Words of Paradise)', *Tablets*, 67. Original Persian/Arabic Tablet online at <http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/b/TB/tb-6.html>.
19. Universal House of Justice, *Wellspring of Guidance: Messages 1963–1968*, 1st rev. edn., Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1976, 70 (letter dated 8 December 1967).
20. Bahá'í International Community, *Century of Light* 95.
21. Universal House of Justice, *One Common Faith*, Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 2005, 43.
22. Bahá'u'lláh, 'Tablet to Fath-i A'zam', *Gleanings* 80. Original Persian/Arabic tablet online at <http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/b/GWB/gwb-34.html>.
23. Bahá'u'lláh, 'Tablet of Maqṣúd'. *Tablets* 164. Original Persian/Arabic tablet online at <http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/b/TB/tb-11.html>.

24. Bahá'í u'lláh, 'Tablet to Mánikchí Šáhib' (*Lawh-i-Mánikchí-Šāhib*), *The Tabernacle of Unity*, Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 2006, 7. Original Persian tablet online at <http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/c/YP/yp-27.html>. For یگانگی *yigānigī*, see Francis Joseph Steingass, *A Comprehensive PersianEnglish Dictionary*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977 (1892), 1535, and for بیگانگی *bigānigī*, see 223.
25. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections From the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, trans. Marzieh Gail, Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 1982, 286. Original Persian/Arabic tablet online at <http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/ab/SWA1/swa1-291.html>.
26. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections*, 277. Original Persian/Arabic tablet online at <http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/ab/SWA1/swa1-283.html#pg267>.
27. Steingass, *PersianEnglish Dictionary*, 861, lexicalizes this word as "ilāj". Contemporary Tehrani pronunciation is "alāj".
28. 'Abdu'l-Baha, 'Letter to Martha Root', translated by Ali Kuli Khan, 1920. Online at http://bahai-library.com/abdulbaha_martha_root_1920. See http://bahai-library.com/abdulbaha_martha_root_1920. Persian text in 'Abdu'l-Baha, *Makātīb-i Ḥaḍrat-i 'Abdu'l-Baha*, Cairo: Faraj' u'llāh Zakī al-Kurḍī, 1921, vol. 3, 67–68. Original Persian/Arabic tablet online at <http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/ab/MA3/ma3-67.html> and <http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/ab/MA3/ma3-68.html>.
29. Alessandro Bausani, 'Note per una tipologia del monoteismo' ('Notes for a typology of monotheism'), *Studi e Materiali di Storia delle Religioni* ('Studies and Documents of History of Religions') 28, 1957, 67–88. See <http://cisaduz.let.uniroma1.it/smsr/issues/1957/pages/#page/2.67/mode/2up>.
30. Theodore C. Denise, 'Raymond F. Piper (1888–1962)', *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* 36, 1962–3, 120.
31. Raymond Frank Piper, 'The Metaphysics of Personality in the Light of Recent American Philosophy', Boston University Graduate School, 1920. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses (PQDT).
32. 'Garnett House Lists Speaker on Religions', *Rochester Journal*, 5 October 1935, 12.
33. 'Professor to Visit Leaders of the World', *Sarasota Herald-Tribune*, 25 February 1932, 5.
34. Kitty Katzell, *Lila: A Biography*, iUniverse, 2006, 57–60.
35. Raymond F. Piper and Lila K. Piper, *Cosmic Art*, edited, with foreword, by Ingo Swann, New York: Hawthorn Books, 1975.
36. Raymond Frank Piper, *The Hungry Eye: An Introduction to Cosmic Art*, Los Angeles: DeVors, 1956.
37. Raymond Frank Piper, 'A Path to Permanent Peace : Book Review'. *World Order* 2(2), 1936, 79–80; idem, 'Spiritual Perspectives', *World Order* 1(10), 1936, 363–72.
38. 'The Papers of Dr. Raymond Piper' (finding aid), Archives and Records Management, Syracuse University. See Box 15 (Speeches), folder 5 (Bahai Faith). There are three documents in this folder. On receiving digital copies from the Syracuse University Archives on 28 September 2012, it quickly became evident that these documents were written in shorthand. There was no evidence, moreover, that two of these documents were, in fact, 'Speeches'. But on one document is clearly written, 'Speech, Bahais', with the title, 'The Spiritual Life'. Courtesy of Meg Mason, Assistant Archivist, Archives & Records Management, Syracuse University.
39. Raymond F. Piper and Paul W. Ward, *The Fields and Methods of Knowledge: A Textbook in Orientation and Logic*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1929.
40. Raymond Frank Piper, 'Ways to Wholeness: Part One', *World Order* 9(9), December 1943, 291–9; idem, 'Ways to Wholeness : Part Two'. *World Order* 9(10), January 1944, 339–50.
41. Piper, *The Bahá'í World* 9 (1940–1944), 670.
42. 'A special reprint of Dr. R. F. Piper's 'Ways to Wholeness' was prepared for the Bureau, and over 200 copies were mailed out with a personal letter to educators', *The Bahá'í World* 9 (1940–1944), 84.
43. Raymond Frank Piper, 'Ways to Wholeness', *The Bahá'í World* 9 (1940–1944), National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada, 1945, 776–88.

44. Andrew Markus, *Mapping Social Cohesion*, Victoria, Australia: Monash University, 2011, 12.
45. In the Arabic linguistic tradition, the '*idāfa*' ('annexation')/'relation', often referred to as a 'genitive relation' or 'construct state') is a grammatical construction that links two Arabic nouns in a noun phrase (*tarkīb ismī*), such that the second noun (definite) amplifies the first (indefinite). See Karen Ryding and Kees Versteegh, '*Idāfa*', *Encyclopedia of Arabic Language and Linguistics*, Leiden: Brill, 2005, vol. 2, 43. In the Persian linguistic tradition, the '*idāfa*' compound is represented with the postfix *-i* (except that when a word ends with a vowel, the postfix becomes *-yi*).
46. Bahá'u'lláh, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, trans. Shoghi Effendi, Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1988 (1941), 14–15. Original Persian/Arabic tablet online at <http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/b/ESW1/esw1-12.html>. For the same text, see also <http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/b/GWB/gwb-132.html>.
47. Moojan Momen, 'The Tablet of Unity (*Lawḥ-i Ittīḥād*) – A Provisional Translation', *Lights of 'Irfān: Papers Presented at the 'Irfān Colloquia and Seminars*, Book II, Evanston, IL: 'Irfān Colloquia, 2001, 93–8. Original Persian/Arabic tablet online at <http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/b/AHM/ahm-388.html>. See also Bahá'u'lláh, *Ad'iyih Hadrat-i Mahbūb* ('The Prayers of the Beloved'), Bundoora, Victoria: Bahá'í Publications Australia, 1994, 388–406.
48. Momen, 'Tablet of Unity' 95. Original Persian/Arabic tablet online at <http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/b/AHM/ahm-388.html>.
49. Shahrokh Monjazez, 'The Creative Word and the Meaning of Unity: An Annotated Survey of Baha'u'llah's *Lawḥ-i Ittīḥād* (Tablet of Unity)'. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Baha'i Studies in San Francisco, 1995, and a revised presentation at the Association for Baha'i Studies conference in Toronto, 2000. Shared by permission of the author.
50. Mīrzā Yahyā 'Amīdu'l-Atibbā Hamadānī, *Memoirs of a Baha'i in Rasht: 1889–1903*, trans. Ahang Rabbani (unpublished), 57. Online at <http://www.scribd.com/doc/20975628/Bahais-in-Rasht>.
51. Momen, 'Tablet of Unity' 95. Original Persian/Arabic tablet online at <http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/b/AHM/ahm-388.html>.
52. Monjazez, 'Baha'u'llah's *Lawḥ-i Ittīḥād*' 2.
53. Juan Cole, 'The Tablet of Unity (*Lawā-i Ittīḥād*): Provisional Translation'. Online at <http://bahai-library.com/provisionals/ittihad.cole.html>.
54. Baha'u'llah, 'Tablet of the World' (*Lawḥ-i Dunyā*), *Tablets* 85. Original Persian/Arabic tablet online at <http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/b/TB/tb-7.html>.
55. Steingass, *PersianEnglish Dictionary* 1276.
56. Monjazez, 'Baha'u'llah's *Lawḥ-i Ittīḥād*' 2.
57. Momen, 'Tablet of Unity' 95–6. Original Persian/Arabic tablet online at <http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/b/AHM/ahm-389.html>.
58. Momen, 'Tablet of Unity' 96. Original Persian/Arabic tablet online at <http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/b/AHM/ahm-391.html>.
59. Monjazez, 'Baha'u'llah's *Lawḥ-i Ittīḥād*' 2.
60. Cole, 'The Tablet of Unity (*Lawḥ-i Ittīḥād*)'.
61. Momen, 'Tablet of Unity', 96. Original Persian/Arabic tablet online at <http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/b/AHM/ahm-394.html>.
62. Monjazez, 'Baha'u'llah's *Lawḥ-i Ittīḥād*' 23.
63. Baha'u'llah, 'Tablet of the Seven Questions' (*Lawḥ-i Haft Pursish*), *Tabernacle* 59. Original Persian tablet online at <http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/c/YP/yp-15.html>.
64. 'Tablet of Unity' (but not identified as such), translated on behalf of the Universal House of Justice, 'Ranks and Functions in the Baha'i Cause', 27 March 1978. Online at http://bahai-library.com/uhj_nsa_counsellors. Original Persian/Arabic tablet online at <http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/b/AHM/ahm-396.html>.
65. Momen, 'Tablet of Unity' 97. Original Persian/Arabic tablet online at <http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/b/AHM/ahm-401.html> and <http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/b/AHM/ahm-402.html>.

66. Momen, 'Tablet of Unity' 97. Original Persian/Arabic tablet online at <http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/b/AHM/ahm-401.html> and <http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/b/AHM/ahm-402.html>.
67. Momen, 'Tablet of Unity' 97. Original Persian/Arabic tablet online at <http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/b/AHM/ahm-398.html>.
68. Monjazeab, 'Baha'u'llah's *Lawḥ-i-Iṭtiḥād*' 4, citing *Daryā-yi Dānish*, 145–6.
69. 'Abdu'l-Baha's Tablet to the Executive Committee of the Central Organization for a Durable Peace (17 December 1919) was dispatched to the Committee at The Hague. See 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections* 302. Original Persian/Arabic tablet online at <http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/ab/SWA1/swa1-307.html>.
70. Momen, 'Tablet of Unity' 97. Online at <http://bahai-library.org/provisionals/ittihad.html>. Original Persian/Arabic tablet online at <http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/b/AHM/ahm-404.html>.
71. Shoghi Effendi, 'Preface', *The Promised Day Is Come*, Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1980, v (numbered brackets inserted).
72. Bahá'u'lláh, *The Seven Valleys and The Four Valleys*, trans. Marzieh Gail and Ali-Kuli Khan, Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1991, 39. Persian/Arabic original: Bahá'u'lláh, *Āthārī qalamī a'lā*, vol. III, Tehran: Mu'assasīh-yi Millī-yi Maṭbū'āt-i Amrī, 129 Badī', 1972–3 (works revealed in the 1850s and early 1860s), 133.
73. See 'Abdu'l-Ḥamīd Isḥrāq-Khāvarī, *Mā'idih-yi Āsmānī* 7:142.
74. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1990, 294. Original Persian/Arabic tablet online at <http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/ab/SAQ/saq-208.html>.
75. Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i Íqán*, trans. Shoghi Effendi, Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1989, 152–3. Original Persian/Arabic tablet online at <http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/b/KI/ki-8.html> (Paragraph 161, page 101).
76. Shoghi Effendi, *The Promised Day Is Come*, Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1980, v.
77. See Bahá'u'lláh, "'Song of the Holy Mariner", Revealed by His Holiness Baha'ullah' [sic], trans. Shoghi Effendi, *Star of the West* 13(4), 17 May 1922, 75–7 (translation received in April 1922). Subsequent translation: idem, 'Tablet of the Holy Mariner', *Bahá'í Prayers: A Selection of Prayers revealed by Bahá'u'lláh, the Báb, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1991, 221–9.
78. Christopher Buck, *Paradise and Paradigm: Key Symbols in Persian Christianity and the Baha'i Faith*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999, 222–3. See provisional translation by Mehran Ghasempour. Online at <http://bahai-library.com/provisionals/lawh.mallah.quds.mg.html>. Original Persian section of this tablet online at <http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/b/MAS4/mas4-339.html> ff. See also 'Abdu'l-Ḥamīd Isḥrāq-Khāvarī *Mā'idih-yi Āsmānī*, vol. 4, Tehran: Mu'assasīh-yi Millī-yi Maṭbū'āt-i Amrī [Baha'i Publishing Trust], 1973/129 BE, 339, online at <http://www.h-net.org/~bahai/areprint/baha/M-R/M/maidih4/4ma339.jpg>. Latter reference courtesy of Bijan Masumian, personal communication, 4 November 2012.
79. Baha'u'llah, 'Tablet of Ornaments' (*Lawḥ-i Tarazāt*), *Tablets* 35–6. Original Persian/Arabic tablet online at <http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/b/TB/tb-4.html>.
80. Steingass, *PersianEnglish Dictionary* 601.
81. Insight by Hajir Moghaddam, personal communication, 21 October 2012.
82. Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 1992, 47.
83. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections* 32 (Tablet Addressed to the readers of *The Christian Commonwealth*, 1 January 1913). Original Persian tablet online at <http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/ab/SWA1/swa1-281.html> and <http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/ab/SWA1/swa1-282.html>.
84. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Min Makátib-i Ḥadrat-i 'Abdu'l-Bahá* ('From the Collected Tablets of His Holiness 'Abdu'l-Bahá'), Rio de Janeiro: Editora Baha'i-Brasil, 1982, 224. Original Persian tablet online at <http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/ab/MMAB/mmab-222.html#pg224>. Sen McClinn (The Netherlands), personal communication, 2 November 2011.
85. Amin Egea (Spain), personal communication, 3 November 2012.

86. Jan Jasion (France), personal communication, 3 November 2012. See Jan Teofil Jasion, *'Abdu'l-Bahá in France*, Paris: Editions Baha'ies France, 1912.
87. Amín Egea (Spain), personal communication, 3 November 2012.
88. 'Abdu'l-Baha, *Abdul Baha on Divine Philosophy*, compiled by Isabel Fraser Chamberlain, Boston: Tudor Press, 1918, 159–64. English translation online at <http://bahai-library.org/books/div.phil/divine.philosophy.09.html>. Amín Egea (Spain), personal communication, 3 November 2012.
89. 'Abdu'l-Baha and Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, *Abdul Baha in Egypt*, ed. and trans. Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, New York: J. H. Sears & Co. Inc. for the New History Foundation, 1929, 19–23. English translation online at http://bahai-library.com/sohrab_abdulbaha_egypt#17. Amín Egea (Spain), personal communication, 3 November 2012.
90. 'Abdu'l-Baha, *Abdul Baha on Divine Philosophy*, 159–60. (Persian transliteration inserted by the present writer.) 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Min Makátib-i Hadrat-i 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, Rio de Janeiro: Editora Baha'i-Brasil, 1982, 224. Original Persian tablet online at <http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/ab/MMAB/mmab-222.html#pg224>.
91. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Secret of Divine Civilization*, trans. Marzieh Gail and Ali-Kuli Khan, Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1990, 73.
92. See Anjam Khursheed, *The Seven Candles of Unity: The Story of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Edinburgh*, London: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1991.
93. In the Baha'i writings, 'century' often means an age or era, rather than 100 years in a particular calendar.
94. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections* 32. Original Persian/Arabic tablet online at <http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/ab/SWA1/swa1-46.html>. A facsimile of the original tablet is reproduced in Khursheed, *The Seven Candles of Unity*, 166–7.
95. Bahá'í International Community, *Century of Light*, Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 2006, 128.
96. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections* 32. Original Persian/Arabic tablet online at <http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/ab/SWA1/swa1-46.html>.
97. Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 26 July 1936 to an individual believer, in *Peace*, compiled by the Research Department of the Universal House of Justice, Haifa, Israel: Bahá'í World Centre, 1985, 34.
98. Bahá'í International Community, *Century of Light* 128–9.
99. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections* 32. Original Persian/Arabic tablet online at <http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/ab/SWA1/swa1-46.html>.
100. Bahá'í International Community, *Century of Light* 128.
101. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections* 32. Original Persian/Arabic tablet online at <http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/ab/SWA1/swa1-46.html>.
102. Bahá'í International Community, *Century of Light* 129.
103. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections* 32. Original Persian/Arabic tablet online at <http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/ab/SWA1/swa1-46.html>.
104. Bahá'í International Community, *Century of Light* 128.
105. Shoghi Effendi, 'Letter of 5 May 1943', *Messages to Canada*, Thornhill, ON: Bahá'í Canada Publications, 1957, 77–8.
106. As previously stated, 'century', as typically used in the Baha'i writings, often means an age or era, rather than a hundred years in a particular calendar.
107. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections* 32. Original Persian/Arabic tablet online at <http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/ab/SWA1/swa1-46.html>.
108. Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 26 July 1936 to an individual believer, in *Peace* 34.
109. Bahá'í International Community, *Century of Light* 129.
110. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections* 32. Original Persian/Arabic tablet online at <http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/ab/SWA1/swa1-46.html>.
111. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections* 112–13. Original Persian/Arabic tablet online at <http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/ab/SWA1/swa1-46.html>.

- bahai.org/fa/t/ab/SWA1/swa1-125.html and <http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/ab/SWA1/swa1-126.html>.
112. Bahá'í International Community, *Century of Light* 128.
 113. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections* 32. Original Persian/Arabic tablet online at <http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/ab/SWA1/swa1-46.html>.
 114. Bahá'í International Community, *Century of Light* 128.
 115. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections* 32. Original Persian/Arabic tablet online at <http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/ab/MA1/ma1-356.html>.
 116. Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1991, 202. Persian translation online at <http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/se/WOB/wob-158.html>.
 117. Letter on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, 28 January 1932 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, in *Peace*, compiled by the Research Department of the Universal House of Justice, Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 1985, 32.
 118. 'Abdu'l-Baha, '23 April 1912: Talk at Howard University, Washington, D.C.', translated by Amin Banani, in 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace: Discourses by Abdul-Baha Abbas during His Visit to the United States in 1912*, Chicago: Baha'i Publishing Committee, 1925/Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1982, 44–6, see 45. Persian text of speech published in *Majmū'ih-yi Khitābāt Ḥadrat-i 'Abdu'l-Bahā fī Urūpā va Amrīkā* ('Collected Talks of 'Abdu'l-Baha in Europe and America'), vol. 2, Tehran: Mu'asisayi Millīyi Maṭbū'ati Amrī, 127 Badi' [Baha'i Era], 1970–1. (Hereafter, volume/page references in this format: 'Khitābāt 2:45'.) Original Persian/Arabic text online at <http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/ab/KA2/ka2-45.html>. Amin Banani, is the emeritus professor of History and Persian Literature at UCLA and former chair of the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures and acting director of the Center for Near Eastern Studies. Here, Professor Banani has left Shoghi Effendi's citation of the prior translation unchanged. See Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice*, Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1990, 38. On this historic speech, see Christopher Buck, 'Abdu'l-Bahá's 1912 Howard University Speech: A Civil War Myth for Interracial Emancipation', 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Journey West: The Course of Human Solidarity', ed. Negar Mottahedeh (Duke University), New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, 111–43.
 119. See Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice*, Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1990, 38. Professor Banani has left Shoghi Effendi's citation of the prior translation (taken down in contemporaneous notes by Joseph H. Hannen, although the translator is not named) unchanged.
 120. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections* 286. Original Persian/Arabic tablet online at <http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/ab/SWA1/swa1-291.html>.
 121. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections* 30. Original Persian/Arabic tablet online at <http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/ab/SWA1/swa1-44.html>.
 122. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections* 297. Original Persian/Arabic tablet online at <http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/ab/SWA1/swa1-302.html>.
 123. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Tablet to August Forel*, Oxford: George Ronald Publishers, 1978, 13. Original Persian/Arabic tablet online at <http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/ab/MA3/ma3-58.html>.
 124. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Tablet to August Forel* 21. Original Persian/Arabic tablet online at <http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/ab/MA3/ma3-58.html>.
 125. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1993, 101–2. Original Persian/Arabic tablet online at <http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/ab/MA3/ma3-58.html#pg58>.
 126. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections* 109. Original Persian/Arabic tablet online at <http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/ab/SWA1/swa1-122.html>.
 127. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Promulgation* 300. Original Persian/Arabic text, *Khitābāt* 2:234–5, online at <http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/ab/KA2/ka2-234.html> and <http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/ab/KA2/ka2-235.html>.
 128. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Promulgation* 175. Original Persian/Arabic text, *Khitābāt* 2:140, online at <http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/ab/KA2/ka2-140.html>.
 129. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Promulgation* 182. Original Persian/Arabic Tablet, *Khitābāt* 2:148, online at <http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/ab/KA2/ka2-153.html>. Note that the expression in the

Persian text literally reads, 'unity of principles' (*vaḥdat-i usūl*). The Persian text adds: 'unity of humankind' (*vaḥdat-i ā'lam-i bashar*).

130. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Promulgation* 175. Original Persian/Arabic text, *Khīṭābāt* 2:140, online at <http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/ab/KA2/ka2-140.html>.
131. *Majmū'ih-yi Khīṭābāt Ḥaḍrat-i 'Abdu'l-Bahā fi Ūrūpā va Āmrīkā* ('Collected Talks of 'Abdu'l-Baha in Europe and America'). Vol. 1. Compiled by Maḥmūd Zarqānī (Cairo: Shaykh Farajū'llāh al-Zakī al-Kurḍī, 1340 AH/1922 CE [title page incorrectly reads 1921]). This first volume was reviewed and approved by 'Abdu'l-Baha for publication, as indicated by the editor's statement: 'Praised be God, the Glory of Glories! Through the grace and loving-kindness of the Center of the Covenant, this lowly servant has succeeded in collecting the talks delivered by 'Abdu'l-Baha during the course of His first trip to Europe in 1320 AH/1912 CE. All of the talks have been approved by 'Abdu'l-Baha and are published at His request. His lowly servant, Maḥmūd Zarqānī'. Translation by Omid Ghaemmaghami, PhD (University of Toronto), personal communication, 26 December 2011 (emphasis added). For the Persian original see the title page of *Khīṭābāt*, vol. 1, online at <http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/ab/KA1/ka1-3.html>, where, at the top of the title page, a short prayer, in what appears to be 'Abdu'l-Baha's handwriting, states: 'O Lord, confirm Shaykh Faraj to render service at the Sacred Threshold. 'Abdu'l-Baha.' Provisional translation by Omid Ghaemmaghami. Id. Vol. 1 was thus published in Egypt in 1340 AH (1922), vol. 2 in 99 BE (1942–3), and vol. 3 in Tehran, 127 BE (1970–1). Reprint of three volumes of the original edition, HofheimLangenhain: Bahá'í Verlag, 1984.
132. Id. Vol. 1 was thus published in Egypt in 1340 AH (1922), vol. 2 in 99 BE (1942–3), and vol. 3 in Tehran, 127 BE (1970–1). Reprint of three volumes of the original edition, HofheimLangenhain: Bahá'í Verlag, 1984.
133. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, from a tablet, translated from the Persian and Arabic, *A Compilation on Baha'i Education*, compiled by the Research Department of the Universal House of Justice, Bahá'í World Centre, August 1976, 36.
134. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections* 117. Original Persian/Arabic tablet online at <http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/ab/SWA1/swa1-130.html>.
135. The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 1 August 1978. *A Compilation on Women*, compiled by the Research Department of the Universal House of Justice, Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 1986, 25. The website maintained by the Bahá'í World Centre states: 'Bahá'ís understand that the family is the basic unit of society. Unless this all-important building block is healthy and unified, society itself cannot be healthy and unified. Monogamous marriage stands at the foundation of family life.' See 'Marriage and Family Life', online at <http://info.bahai.org/article-1-6-4-1.html>.
136. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections* 279. Original Persian/Arabic tablet online at <http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/ab/SWA1/swa1-284.html>.
137. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections* 215. Original Persian/Arabic tablet online at <http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/ab/SWA1/swa1-225.html>.
138. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections* 84. Original Persian/Arabic tablet online at <http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/ab/SWA1/swa1-97.html>.
139. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections* 277. Original Persian/Arabic tablet online at <http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/ab/SWA1/swa1-283.html>.
140. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections* 103. Original Persian/Arabic tablet online at <http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/ab/SWA1/swa1-117.html>.
141. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections* 164. Original Arabic tablet online at <http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/ab/SWA1/swa1-175.html>.
142. 'Abdu'l-Baha, *Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas*, Baha'i Publishing Committee, 1909, 663. See also *ibid.* 247 ('unity of the maid-servants of the Merciful').
143. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Promulgation* 176. For the original Persian text, see the next note.
144. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Khīṭābāt* 2:142. Original Persian/Arabic text, *Khīṭābāt* 2:142, online at <http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/ab/KA2/ka2-142.html>.
145. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Promulgation* 17–18. Original Persian/Arabic text, *Khīṭābāt* 2:17, online at <http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/ab/KA2/ka2-22.html#pg17>.
146. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections* 113–14. Original Persian/Arabic tablet online at <http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/ab/SWA1/swa1-113.html>.

bahai.org/fa/t/ab/SWA1/swa1-126.html and <http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/ab/SWA1/swa1-127.html>.

147. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections* 87–8. Original Persian/Arabic tablet online at <http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/ab/SWA1/swa1-100.html>.
148. Steingass, *PersianEnglish Dictionary*, 33, translates *irtibāṭ* as 'Binding, being tied; connection, affinity, familiarity, close friendship'.
149. Steingass, *PersianEnglish Dictionary*, 92, translates *iltiṣām* as 'conciliation' in the context of 'healing'.
150. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1990, 14–15 (emphasis added). Original Persian/Arabic tablet published in 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Alváḥ-i Vaṣāyā-yi Mubārakih-yi Ḥaḍrat-i 'Abdu'l-Bahā*, Karachi: Sterling Garden Road Press, 1960, 15–16. Thanks to Adib Masumian for providing this reference and the relevant Persian text. Personal communication, 31 October 2012.
151. Bahá'u'lláh, *Kalimát-i Firdawsīyih* (Words of Paradise). *Tablets* 66–7. Original Persian/Arabic tablet online at <http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/b/TB/tb-6.html>.
152. Shoghi Effendi, Letter dated 2 January 1934, *Dawn of a New Day*, New Delhi: Bahá'í Publishing Trust of India, 1970, 48.
153. Shoghi Effendi, 'Letter of 30 November 1930', *Unfolding Destiny*, London: UK Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1981, 426–7.
154. Shoghi Effendi, *Messages to the Bahá'í World: 1950–1957*, Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1971, 46 and 52.
155. Shoghi Effendi, Letter dated September 5, 1936, *Dawn of a New Day*, 61.
156. Shoghi Effendi, 'Letter of 2 March 1949', *The Light of Divine Guidance*, vol. 2, Hofheim-Langenhain: Baha'i-Verlag, 1985, 80.
157. Shoghi Effendi, 'Letter of January 2, 1934', *Dawn of a New Day* 48.
158. Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1991, 202.
159. Shoghi Effendi, *World Order*, 203. Persian translation online at <http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/se/WOB/wob-159.html>.
160. Shoghi Effendi, *World Order* 137–8. Persian translation online at <http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/se/DOB/dob-66.html>, in which the Persian for 'mystic unity of God and His Manifestations' is rendered *vaḥdat-i ma'navīyih-yi maẓāhir-i ilāhīyih*.
161. Universal House of Justice, *Messages from The Universal House of Justice 1968–1973*, Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1976, 38.
162. Universal House of Justice, *Wellspring of Guidance: Messages of the Universal House of Justice 1963–68*, Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1969, 53.
163. *Directives from the Guardian*, pp. 86–87.
164. Universal House of Justice, 'To the Conference of the Continental Boards of Counsellors', Letter dated 27 December 2005 (emphasis added).
165. Shoghi Effendi, Letter dated 22 November 1935, *Dawn of a New Day* 56.
166. Bahá'í International Community, *The Prosperity of Humankind*, Haifa, Israel: 3 March 1995, ¶ 11 (emphasis added). Online at <http://statements.bahai.org/95-0303.htm>.
167. Shoghi Effendi, '10 October 1928', *Messages to Canada*, Thornhill, ON: Bahá'í Canada Publications, 1957, 28.
168. Shoghi Effendi, 'Letter of 28 April 1948', *Messages to Canada* 104.
169. See principle #13, *supra*.
170. Shoghi Effendi, *Bahá'í Administration*, Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1974, 35–6. See also Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1979, 334.
171. Shoghi Effendi, *Bahá'í Administration* 45.
172. Shoghi Effendi, 'Letter of 2 January 1934', *Dawn of a New Day* 48.

173. Albert Gore, *Earth in the Balance: Ecology and the Human Spirit*, New York: Rodale, 2006, 261–2, quoting from a letter, dated 17 February 1933, written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, in 'Conservation of the Earth's Resources', *The Compilation of Compilations*, compiled by Research Department of the Universal House of Justice, Mona Vale: Bahá'í Publications Australia, 1991, vol. 1, 84.
174. Universal House of Justice, 'Individual Rights and Freedoms: A Statement of the Universal House of Justice', letter dated 29 December 1988, ¶¶ 52, 53 and 55. Online at www.bahaistudies.net/uhj/individualrights.pdf.
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177. Bahá'u'lláh, 'Tablet to Queen Victoria', *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 2002, 91. Original Arabic tablet online at <http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/b/GWB/gwb-120.html>.
178. See, for example, Daniel G. Remick, MD, 'Let the treatment fit the disease', *Critical Care Medicine* 39(6), June 2011, 1549–50.
179. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections* 59. Original Persian/Arabic tablet online at <http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/ab/SWA1/swa1-71.html> ff.
180. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections* 305 (emphasis added). Original Persian/Arabic tablet online at <http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/ab/SWA1/swa1-301.html> ff.
181. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections* 61 (emphasis added). Original Persian/Arabic tablet online at <http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/ab/SWA1/swa1-301.html> ff.
182. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections* 13, citing Revelation 21:6–7 (emphasis added). Translation by Shoghi Effendi, who comments: 'One of the very first general messages of our beloved 'Abdu'l-Bahá to His friends in America, dated 5th of Safer 1314 AH (1896 AD).' The translation published in *Selections* differs from Shoghi Effendi's original translation, however, in the passage beginning with, 'This is the City of God and His abode', where Shoghi Effendi renders, 'Hail, O City of God! Abide thou ...'. First published in *Star of the West*, vol. 14(12), March 1924, 358. Reference courtesy of Sen McGlinn, personal communication, 4 November 2012. Original Persian/Arabic tablet online at <http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/ab/SWA1/swa1-28.html>.
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Persecution and Development: The History of the Baha'i Community of Māhfurūzak in Mazandaran, Iran

Moojan Momen

Abstract

The Baha'i Faith was introduced to the village of Mahfuruzak (near Sari in Mazandaran, Iran) when the village chief invited his nephew Mulla 'Ali Jan to come to be the religious leader of the village in about 1871. Mulla 'Ali Jan had already become a Baha'i while studying and now gradually started to spread the new religion among the people of the village. Eventually the whole village became Baha'is as did many from surrounding villages. Mulla 'Ali and his wife 'Alaviyyih Khanum also began the social and economic development of the village. The progress made attracted the enmity of the Muslim clerics of the area who sent false reports to the government, resulting in an attack on the village and the arrest and execution of Mulla 'Ali Jan. Despite this, 'Alaviyyih Khanum continued the development of the village as well as travelling to spread the Baha'i Faith. The traditional school that had been set up in the village was transformed into a modern school. Persecution of the Baha'i community resumed during and after the Iranian Revolution of 1979.

Keywords

Mahfuruzak
Mazandaran
Iran
religion and
development
religious persecution
female religious
leadership

Mahfuruzak is a village near Sari in Mazandaran. It is situated 10 kilometres south-west of Sari and 1 kilometre south of the road from Sari to 'Aliyabad. Its population was 560 in 1951. Rice, cotton and sugar-cane were the main crops of this area. The women wove silk and linen. Although many of the Baha'i communities in Mazandaran date from the time of the Bab and the presence in Mazandaran of Quddus and many of the Letters of the Living, the Baha'i history of Mahfuruzak dates from the time of Baha'u'llah. No complete history has been written of the Baha'i community of the village but small amounts of information can be found in various sources.

The founder of the Baha'i community and its leading member for many years was Mulla 'Ali Jan (1262/1846–82). He was born in the village of Rabkandih (10 kilometres south of Mahfuruzak) and was orphaned at the age of six. His mother's brother Aqa Mirza Aqa Jan, the *kad-khudā* (chief) of Mahfuruzak looked after him from that time on and paid for him to go to Barfurush and receive a religious education at the Madrasah Sulayman Khan in Sari and the Madrasah Mirza Zaki in Barfurush, where he achieved the rank of *mujtahid*. While he was in Barfurush, he was introduced to the Baha'i Faith by Ustad Muhammad Kulāhdūz and after meeting the Baha'i teachers (*muballighs*) Aqa Jamal Burujirdi and Aqa Sayyid Ridā Shahrīrīzādī became a Baha'i in 1284 (1867). On completion of his studies, he went to

the village of Surkhrūd, but after a year, in 1288 (1871), his uncle summoned him to Mahfurzak and installed him as the religious leader of the village.

At first Mulla `Ali Jan concentrated on teaching the inhabitants of the village true Islam. It was the practice of the women in those regions to remain at home and not to wear any Islamic head-covering. He arranged that all of the adults of the village would come to the mosque in the evenings after their day's work, the women sitting with head-coverings behind the men and he would teach them the essential beliefs and practices of their religion. His efforts were so much appreciated that people from surrounding villages began to come also.

After a few years of this, he secretly introduced the Baha'i Faith to Sayyid Aqa Buzurg, who was his cousin (he had succeeded his father as *kad-khuda* of the village) and whom he judged to be the most ready to hear this. This man soon became a Baha'i and brought in his family. Mulla `Ali Jan married Sayyid Aqa Buzurg's sister `Alaviyyih Khanum (this had been her father's dying wish). After this, Mulla `Ali Jan began to refer to the fulfilment of prophecy in his preaching and eventually announced his adherence to the Baha'i Faith. The whole of the village converted, some immediately and some after a time, their numbers reaching 400.¹

Mulla `Ali Jan had established a reputation for piety and uprightness throughout the whole area in which Mahfuruzak is situated and many from surrounding villages used to attend his sermons. Thus when he openly announced from the pulpit his adherence to the Baha'i Faith, this led to the establishment of Baha'i communities in near-by villages that lie just to the south of the road from Sari to `Aliyabad, in particular Būr-Khayl Aratih, Chalih-Zamin and Kafshgar-Kala.² In all he was responsible for the conversion of some 1,500 in the area.³

Mulla `Ali Jan was also responsible for the introduction of the Baha'i Faith to more distant villages. Ivil is a small remote village situated in the jungle-covered mountains of Mazandaran in the Chahar-Dangih area of Hizārjarīb (12 kilometres east of Kiyāsar, 90 kilometres south-east of Sari, 45 kilometres west of Damghan; population 500 in 1951). Mulla Husayn `Ali (1831–1911), who was from a clerical family in this village, had attended the Madrasah Sulayman Khan in Sari and been a fellow student and roommate of Mulla `Ali Jan. He had returned to his village and established himself as a cleric and he became famous as a *rawdih-khān* (reciter of the sufferings of the Imams) on account of his good voice, even performing in front of Nasiru'd-Din Shah and earning the title Bulbul adh-Dhākīrīn (the nightingale of the reciters). When he heard that his friend Mulla `Ali Jan had become a Baha'i, Mulla Husayn `Ali set off for Mahfuruzak hoping to change his friend's mind but what he heard set him thinking. A short time later, Mulla `Ali Jan visited the village, completing the conversion of Mulla Husayn `Ali and bringing copies of the Baha'i scriptures with him. Mulla Husayn `Ali first converted his wife Zībā'iyih and family as well as his sister Umm Layli.⁴ Gradually, about half of the villagers became Baha'is and this process was assisted by a return visit from Mulla `Ali Jan.⁵ Close to Ivil is Kalkinār (5 kilometres south-east of Ivil; pop. 1,200 in 1951). Shaykh Hasan Kalkinārī (d. c.1300/1882) went for studies to the shrine cities of Iraq, where he met Baha'u'llah and became a Babi. He wrote to his two sisters, Āminih and Şanam, that the True One had appeared and that they should make

enquiries from Mulla Husayn `Ali Ivili or Mulla `Ali Jan Mahfuruzaki. These two women set off for Ivil accompanied by the latter's husband Mirza Gul. Mulla Husayn `Ali was, however, cautious and did not reveal to them the full truth. Consequently they travelled to Mahfuruzak and were converted by Mulla `Ali Jan. They returned and told their family of this, showing them Shaykh Hasan's letter. Some fifty people became Baha'is.⁶ Mulla `Ali Jan was even partly responsible for the establishment of the Baha'i community in the town of Sari itself. Among the first converts of this town was Shaykh Hadi Afrāpulī (d. 1316/1898), one of the clerics of the town who had been a fellow student of Mulla `Ali Jan. When news of Mulla `Ali Jan's conversion spread, Shaykh Hadi volunteered to go to Mahfuruzak and investigate. This trip resulted in his conversion.⁷

Social and Economic Development

Mulla `Ali Jan and `Alavaiyyih Khanum began to try to develop the social and spiritual life of the village. Apart from organizing prayers and religious classes, they set up two schools, one for boys and one for girls; they organized a buying and selling co-operative so that the people of the village could obtain better prices for the agricultural and other items that they produced; they arranged for some of the people to learn crafts so as to make the village more self-sufficient; and they also purchased cotton which the people of the village would clean and card and sell direct to Russian and Armenian merchants who exported it to Russia. Haji Mirza Haydar `Ali Isfahani spent several months in this area and records that:

In Mazandaran, in particular outside the cities, the houses have no enclosure or wall around them. The women do not cover themselves and the men do not wear clean and tidy clothes. They know no work or craft except planting rice, tending animals and gathering firewood. The late [Mulla `Ali Jan] had established a number of practices: that their houses should have walls and doors; that the women cover themselves; that each person should have a way of earning a living in addition to farming; that in every house, an area be set aside for prayer and worship of God and this area be carpeted and kept clean; that only after completing their morning devotions, should they put on their working clothes for farming; that in the evening they should again put on clean clothes and either individually or together go to their prayer area and say some prayers and recite scripture. After their dinner, they would gather together in the evenings and have talks on the Baha'i teachings. Each night, the place and speaker who would teach them would have previously been arranged. Rude and coarse language was forbidden ... The people of the village were so well trained and educated that, although they were well-known to be Baha'is, and all of the clerics of the area were their enemies, yet no one could find or attach any fault or blame to any of their actions.⁸

From this it can be seen that Mulla `Ali Jan helped the villagers to develop with regard to their morals and spiritual well-being, their education and literacy, their health and hygiene, their agricultural practices and their wealth and prosperity. He had also tried to avoid criticism from the clerics of the area by adopting stricter Islamic standards than was customary among the villages of Mazandaran.⁹

One of the most important initiatives of Mulla `Ali Jan was to teach the children of the village. Mulla `Ali Jan had taught his own wife and the three children of his wife's brother so that they could write the Baha'i scriptures in a good hand, could read them and understand and explain them. Then they established a school (*maktab*) for both boys and girls in the village. The following account from Fadil Mazandarani surveys these and other changes:

He [Mulla `Ali Jan] educated and guided all in the principles and practices of the Baha'i Faith and in elevated morals and the highest standards of behaviour such that the Baha'i in this village [Mahfuruzak], with respect to their cleanliness, their behaviour and their clothing, both men and women, and with regard to the degree of unity and mutual assistance that they achieved, and in the development of their agriculture and farming practices, they surpassed the people of the other villages and the village flourished and its people became wealthy. He established schools (*maktab*s) for the education of both boys and girls. He instructed that they should build their houses high, and in a dignified and decorous style. In each house, they had a clean room specially for worship and every morning and evening, they would engage in worship and prayer and in the recital of tablets and verses. They would hold gatherings and spiritual feasts in their homes with the utmost order, good behaviour and reverence.

They did not have recourse to the gatherings of the clerics and or to the courts of governors or influential people for resolving disputes and litigation [as was the custom]. They occupied themselves with agriculture, the cultivation of cotton and trade in a co-operative manner. And by selling their cotton directly to Russian, Armenian and Iranian merchants they became wealthy and no one from among them remained poor. On account of the continuous exhortations, advice and warnings that Mulla `Ali Jan gave, no dishonesty occurred in their dealings and trade. All of the affairs of the village proceeded on the basis of order, success and prosperity.

It was not long before a number of the men and women, in particular his own wife `Alaviyyih Khanum, acquired knowledge and capacity and could compose well and in an excellent script, with eloquence, correctness of grammar, intelligence and an awareness of the different religions.¹⁰

In addition it appears that Mulla `Ali Jan had changed the customary building of the houses of the village from wood and straw with no walls around the property to buildings of sun-baked brick and mud surrounded by walls.¹¹ There is also an account of how Mulla `Ali Jan dealt with some troublesome members of the community:

... And in this way, they [the Baha'is of Mahfuruzak] became known among the people for their uprightness, good conduct, friendliness, hard work, and fair dealing and became wealthy and propertied and powerful. But some became envious and, since greed, waywardness and selfishness exists in people, they cheated with regard to the cotton. They hid bad cotton in with the good cotton. And so despite the fact that he would advise and exhort them and would talk of the benefits and advisability of truthfulness and trustworthiness and the harm and loss ... of acting otherwise; despite all this, some would

cheat. And he, with his astuteness knew this and charged some trustworthy and fair person ... to secretly assess the matter and let him know. And so two or three times it occurred that he found out that someone was cheating and that it would become a source of disgrace for all and so he sent and bought the cotton with his own money. He ordered that all of it be taken out into the countryside and there, without the knowledge of the original owner and without anyone finding out who had adulterated the cotton, he had the cotton burned and then had it announced that it was adulterated cotton. I do not know the amount he paid in this way but it must have been 300 or 400 *tumans*, and he was not a wealthy man.

This selfless and prudent action had the following results: first, it caused the cheater to be dismayed and to regret his actions; second, it taught people to be forbearing and forgiving of the sins of others and not to defame and disgrace others; third, it showed them piety and temperance; fourth, it demonstrated and made clear that betrayal is like dry firewood and fit only for the fire; fifth, it showed that faith, certitude and detachment must be demonstrated by deeds and actions; sixth, it made people understand that a human being sacrifices personal benefit for the common good; seventh, it was the cause of confidence, gratitude and astonishment among the buyers; and eighth, it was a cause of the approval of the people and their confidence in the spiritual and moral qualities of the Baha'is and shone a light onto a broad and open pathway to salvation and eternal life.¹²

Persecution of the Baha'i Community

Eventually word got out to the clerics in the surrounding area that these developments were occurring in this Baha'i village. They wrote to the government accusing Mulla 'Ali Jan of heresy and also of various innovations in customary practice including the fact that he had abandoned the practice of building the walls of the houses in the village with wood and straw and had begun to build with sun-baked bricks. A first investigator was sent from Tehran and he reported back that the accusations were baseless. But the clerics continued to send letters to Tehran and eventually a second investigator, the Amir Divan, was sent. The clerics and enemies of the Baha'is made sure this time to surround him and bribe him so that he would report back the way they wanted.

When, in early 1883, this report reached Kamran Mirza Na'ib as-Saltani, the son of Nasir ad-Din Shah who was governor of Tehran and Mazandaran, he sent an exaggerated report to his father to the effect that Mulla 'Ali Jan, a 'Babi', was building a fort in Mazandaran and gathering people and it would not be long before there was another Babi uprising like Shaykh Tabarsi. As the Shah was leaving for Mashhad, he instructed Kamran Mirza to investigate the matter further. Just at this time, Kamran Mirza had initiated a campaign against the Baha'is of Tehran and the leading clerics of Tehran had issued severe *fatwās* ordering the death of all Baha'is. And so Kamran Mirza sent a new deputy governor Mirza Ibrahim Khan Nuri Saham ud-Dawlih to Mazandaran with orders to kill every Baha'i in the province. On arrival in Sari, Nuri asked Aqa Vali the *kalantar* (mayor) of the town for a list of Baha'is. The latter gave him a long list of Baha'is both in the town and in the villages around Mahfuruzak. One of those present when this list was presented was Mirza Mahdi Kārpardāz, who was a Baha'i. He insisted

that the *kalantar* had only made such a long list in order to settle private scores and to increase his own importance and that it was worthless.¹³ Eventually the governor tore up the list, pretended to be satisfied with what he had heard about the Baha'is and went off to Ashraf (Bihshahr) in the far east of the province. But secretly, he sent Muzaffar Mirza Divan Big, Muhammad Husayn Khan Vazir the son of Mirza Masih, Mirza 'Isa Khan and Aqa Vali Kalantar against Mahfuruzak, supported by 400 soldiers. At first 'Ali Khan Tufangchibashi Nuri was sent into Mahfuruzak pretending to be a travelling Baha'i in order to identify the leading Baha'is, locate where they hid their Baha'i scriptures and gather evidence. Once he had done this, he gave a signal and 400 soldiers led by Rustam Khan attacked Mahfuruzak at dawn on 29 April 1883. The whole village was looted and much destruction wrought. Even trees were burned. Most of the population fled into the jungle but Mulla 'Ali, Aqa Sayid Buzurg his brother-in-law, two other brothers-in-law and four other Baha'is were arrested and taken off to Sari, together with the Baha'i scriptures that had been found. Some others were arrested along the way. In the evening of that day, the governor sent Aqa Vali the above-mentioned *kalantar* of Sari to Mahfuruzak to search for guns. He found none but arrested 'Alaviyyih Khanum and five other women Baha'is and some children, as well as looting and sacking many Baha'i homes.

On the third day of their arrival in Sari, 'Alaviyyih Khanum was brought before Saham ud-Dawlih and questioned. She boldly made a comparison between her position and that of the family of the prophet Muhammad who had also been made captive and brought before the governor of Iraq (after Karbala) and then she asked what crime the children had committed that they had been arrested and brought to Sari. This shamed the governor into letting the women and children return to Mahfuruzak. The male prisoners were brought before Aqa Shaykh Ja'far Turabi, the leading cleric of Sari, but he refused to decree their death. Saham ud-Dawlih sent a report to Kamran Mirza in Tehran who in turn showed this to the Shah. Orders were sent for the prisoners to be transferred to Tehran.

After some 26 days, Mulla 'Ali Jan and the other prisoners were sent to Tehran. So frightened were the authorities of a 'Babi uprising', that a special officer Hamid Khan Sardar was sent from Tehran with weapons from the arsenal to take charge of conveying the prisoners; a guard of 400 soldiers from Sari preceded the prisoners; and 400 cavalry of Larijan under Mirza Ahmad Khan (son of 'Abbās-Qulī Khan Larijani who had been one of the commanders at Shaykh Tabarsi) followed them. After part of the journey, Hamid Khan gained confidence and sent the 400 infantry home. The prisoners arrived on 13 June 1883. Mulla 'Ali Jan was offered freedom and honours if he recanted but he refused. Nasiru'd-Din Shah was away on a trip to Khurasan at this time and so a telegram was sent to him in Damghan. He sent instructions that Mulla 'Ali Jan's fate should be decided by Haji Mulla 'Ali Kani, the senior cleric in Tehran. The latter decreed Mulla 'Ali Jan's death and he was publically executed on 23 Sha'bān 1300/29 June 1883 in the Pāy-Qapūq Square. For two days following the execution, two Baha'i women of Tehran, Susan Baji and Āminih the sister of Haji Akhund, went to the place where the body had been thrown and gave money to the guards so that they would prevent stones being thrown at and other insults being delivered to the

body. Then on the third day, they, together with the wife and mother-in-law of Aqa Shir 'Ali Kashi, bribed the guards to allow the body to be removed for burial. The other Baha'is remained in prison and were whipped 50 lashes each week. They were only released after two years in prison, although one of them, Ustad Nuru'llah Salmani, had already died in prison.¹⁴

'Alaviyyih Khānum, however, continued the work that she and her husband had started in the village and went on herself to become a noted travelling Baha'i teacher. She was given the name Hāmīdih at her birth in about 1272/1855–6 but was called 'Alaviyyih on account of her descent from the Imam 'Ali. Far from allowing the death of her husband and shortly afterwards in 1885 of both of her children to deter her, 'Alaviyyih Khanum, at the age of 28, took her husband's place as a leader of the Baha'i community and of the village and continued with the reforms that they had made, concentrating especially on children's education. She was at the centre of a circle of women which formed the heart of the community and which included her mother Khurshid Khanum, sisters Zaynab Khatun and Shahrbanu and her sister-in-law Khadijih Khanum. From about 1886, 'Alaviyyih also began to travel, at first within Mazandaran, but 'Abdu'l-Baha, who gave her the title Amatu'l-Bahā (the maid-servant of Baha), encouraged her to travel further afield and in 1901, she undertook a trip to Khurasan and Ashkhabad. In 1903, while travelling between Khurasan and Yazd, she narrowly escaped death at the hands of a mob who had learned of the persecutions that were going on in Yazd at that time and that they had in their caravan a number of Baha'is.¹⁵ She went on from there to Abadih and also lived in Tehran for a time. In 1910, she was in Rasht for a time. Everywhere that she went, her main concerns were to propagate the Baha'i Faith and to advance the social position of women in the Baha'i community. Accompanying her on her travels was her nephew Mirza 'Ali Muhammad.¹⁶ She died in 1921 and the enemies of the Baha'i Faith tried to make difficulties about carrying out the funeral. A local Baha'i notable, Sardār Jalīl (Luṭf-'Ali Khan Kulbādī or Gulbādī, d. 1348/1930 or 1352/1933) arrived and used his influence to settle the situation. In fact Gulbadi purchased ownership of Mahfuruzak to spare the Baha'is of the village from harassment by owners who were unfriendly towards the Baha'i Faith.¹⁷

Later History

After the passing of Baha'u'llah, Jamal Burujirdi came to Mahfuruzak hoping to attract the people of the village to the side of Mirza Muhammad 'Ali, who was in rebellion against 'Abdu'l-Baha. 'Alaviyyih Khanum told him of a dream that she had had of Baha'u'llah coming to Mahfuruzak. When Burujirdi tried to interpret this dream to refer to his own coming to the village, 'Alaviyyih Khanum was so disgusted she threw him out of her house.¹⁸

In about February 1912 during the upheavals following the Constitutional Revolution and after the killings of five Baha'is in Sari and one in Bur-Khayl Aratih, a mob seized Aqa Mir Safar, a respected Baha'i of Mahfuruzak, and took him to Aratih where the local supporters of the former shah Muhammad 'Ali had their headquarters. They took him before their leader, Asadullah Khan Pahlavan Savadkuhi, who had only a few days before beaten several Baha'is severely and had proclaimed that all the Baha'is should be killed. As soon as Aqa Mir Safar arrived there he was set upon by

a bloodthirsty crowd that had gathered around the ring-leader and beaten until almost dead. A message was sent to his relatives that they could retrieve his half-dead body on payment of a ransom. As his relatives were carrying him away in a litter, however, some in the mob started to say: 'Whoever goes and kills him will earn themselves a place in paradise and will have done a service to Islam.' Whereupon a group set out after him and one of them shot him dead.¹⁹

During the time of 'Abdu'l-Baha, a local spiritual assembly was set up in the village and began to administer the affairs of the village. Following on from the traditional *maktab* set up by Mulla 'Ali, a modern school was established in the village in 1923 by the local assembly with Aqa 'Ali Muhammad, the above-mentioned nephew of 'Alaviyyih Khanum, acting as the headmaster (*mudīr*). It was set up at first in the grounds of the house of Mulla 'Ali and 'Alaviyyih Khanum and then moved to another location. The school started with about 20 pupils but grew after children from nearby villages, such as Aratih (5 kilometres away), also attended this school, walking there every day. Aqa Vajīhu'llah Khan Mu'addab Yazdi was asked to come from the school at 'Arab Khayl and be the teacher in Mahfuruzak. When he was forced to leave after three years due to illness, he was replaced, after an interval, by a former student of the school Mirza Qasim Iqani. The latter taught for six years and then left which led to the school being closed and the children of the village going without schooling for a time. However from about 1943, Qudsiyyih 'Alaviyyān (1918–95), a grand-niece of 'Alaviyyih Khanum, undertook to travel from Sari where she was working as a teacher to Mahfuruzak every weekend from Thursday evening to Saturday morning and full-time during the summer holidays in order to make up some of the loss of education for the children of the village. In 1955, when as a result of the Falsafi episode of persecution of the Baha'is, she lost her job, 'Alaviyyān moved to the village and began teaching full-time so that all of the children of the village became literate. She also extended her range of activities to include social work, looking after the sick, guiding the youth, and helping the poor. The Baha'i summer schools for the area were held at the house of Mulla 'Ali and 'Alaviyyān was the supervisor and director of this also.²⁰

After the Islamic Revolution, on 6 June 1983, following a televised speech by Khomeini attacking the Baha'is, a mob began to chase the children, throwing stones at them and chanting 'Bahā'ī, Bahā'ī, Jāsūs-i Imrīkā'ī' (Baha'i, Baha'i, American spy). Then on 16 June, they burned down the house of Mulla 'Ali and some five other Baha'i-owned compounds, looting whatever could be carried off and destroying stocks of grain in the process. They announced by loud-speaker that whoever among the Baha'is failed to come to the mosque that night, to renounce the Baha'i Faith and become a Muslim, would be killed or driven out of the village. In the event a number of the leading Baha'is of the village were arrested and imprisoned and the other Baha'is subjected to continuing harassment.²¹

The grandson of Aqa Sayyid Buzurg ('Alaviyyih Khanum's brother), Mr Buzurg 'Alaviyan, was born in Mahfuruzak and grew to become a very successful engineer. His firm built numerous important public works projects in Iran and he was highly respected for his integrity and competence. He was executed as a Baha'i in Tehran in June 1981 (1 Tir 1360).²²

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Contributor details

Moojan Momen has published numerous books and papers, including *The Bābi and Bahā'ī Religions, 1844–1944: Some Contemporary Western Accounts* (George Ronald, 1981), *Introduction to Shi'ī Islam* (Yale University Press, 1985) and *Understanding Religion* (previously *The Phenomenon of Religion*, Oneworld, 2000).

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Endnotes

1. Hājī Mirza Hāydar 'Alī Isfahānī, Manuscript biography of Mirzā Abu'l-Faḍl Gulpāygānī (in private collection), 256.
2. There are two villages called Kafshgar-Kala around 'Aliyabad. One is situated 8 kilometres north-east of 'Aliyabad between Mahfuruzak and Bur-Khayl. The Baha'i Faith was established in this village by Mulla 'Ali Jan and other Baha'is from Mahfuruzak. The other is a large village and is sometimes called Kafshgar-Kala Buzurg, situated 2 kilometres west of 'Aliyabad, where there was also a Baha'i community.
3. Isfahani, Gulpaygani 271; ZH 6:979.
4. 'Alī Aḥmadī, 'Nufūdh va intishār-i Diyanāt Bahā'ī dar Rustā-yi Īvil' (typescript, 1995, in private hands), ch. 2, pp. 17–22.
5. Ahmadi ('Rustā-yi Īvil', ch. 2, p. 23) writes 'more than half of the village', while Shaqāyiq Īqānī states that 25 out of 60 families were Baha'is, 'Tārīkhchih Madāris Bahā'ī dar Māzandarān' (Thesis, Mu'assisih Ma'ārif 'ālī, Iran, 158 BE/1380 AQS/2001) 93.
6. Asadu'llāh Fāḍil Māzandarānī, *Asrār al-āthār* (5 vols. Tehran, Mu'assasih Millī Maṭbū'āt Amrī, 124–9 BE/1967–72) 4:47; Iqani, Madaris 148–9.
7. On the day of the execution of the Mulla 'Ali Jan, Shaykh Hadi hurried to Mulla 'Ali Jan's home to comfort his family and was declared an infidel by the clerics of the town on account of this, Mazandarani, *Asrar* 4:97–8.
8. Haji Mirza Haydar 'Ali Isfahani, *Bihjat uş-Şudūr*, Hofheim: Bahā'ī-Verlag, 2002, 208.
9. Asadu'llāh Fāḍil Māzandarānī, *Zuhūru'l-Hāqq* (vols. 5 and 6, manuscript in private collection; vol. 8, parts one and two, Tehran: Mu'assisih Millī Maṭbū'āt Amrī, 131–2 BE, hereinafter ZH) 6:980; Isfahani, *Bihjat* 208; Hāj Āqā Muḥammad 'Alāqihband Yazdī, 'Tārīkh Mashrūṭiyat' (issued as vol. 2 of the photocopied series of documents from the Iranian National Bahā'ī Archives) 90.
10. ZH 6:980; see also Isfahani, *Bihjat* 208.
11. 'Alāqihband, Tarikh 90; Isfahani, *Bihjat* 208.
12. Isfahani, Gulpaygani 274–5.
13. ZH 5:336; 'Azīzu'llāh Sulaymānī, *Maşābīḥ Hidāyat*, 9 vols., Tehran: Mu'assisih Millī Maṭbū'āt Amrī, 104–32 BE/1947–76, 4:516; Ismā'īl Mahjūrī, *Tārīkh Māzandarān*, vol. 2, Sārī: Āthār, 1345/1966, 197.
14. The main source for the life and execution of Mulla 'Ali Jan is the account by his widow 'Alaviyyih Khanum Mähfuruzakī, dated 16 November 1913, 'Jināb-i Mullā 'Ali Jān Mähfurūzakī', *Andalīb* vol. 8, no. 31 (Summer 1989) 55–8; see also Sulaymānī, *Maşābīḥ* 4:499–537, 9:601; ZH 5:335–45, 6:979–82; Zhālih Riḍā'ī, 'Mähfurūzak, Mähfurūzan: Sharḥ-i ḥāl-i mashāhīr rustā-yi Mähfurūzak', thesis, Mu'assisih Ma'ārif 'ālī, Iran, 158 BE/1380 AQS/2001, ii–iii, 7–58; Ismā'īl Mahjūrī, *Tārīkh Māzandarān*, vol. 2, Sārī: Āthār, 1345/1966,

196–8 (this source gives the day of the initial attack on the village as 15 May 1883 and the date of the execution as 28 June 1883); ‘Alī Asghar Bahā’ī, ‘Istintāqīyyih-yi Tīhrān’, undated manuscript in private collection, 110–22 (this source gives 14 May as the day of the attack; it states that only seven Baha’is were sent from Sari to Tehran, gives the date of their arrival in Tehran as 14 June, implies a much smaller escort and gives the date of the execution of Mulla ‘Alī Jan as being 28 June); Malik-Khusravī, Muḥammad ‘Alī, *Tarikh-i Shuhadā-yi Amr*, 3 vols, Tehran: Mu’assisiḥ Millī Matbū’ āt Amrī, 130 BE, 3:384–426; Isfahani, Gulpaygani 256–61, 267–9. Badī’ullāh īmānī (‘Masjūniūn-i Māzandarān dar Ahd-i Abhā’, *Payām-i Bahā’ī*, 307, June 2005, 40–4), states that one of the prisoners, Āqā Zakariyā, was not even a Baha’i and protested this throughout the period of his imprisonment to no avail. ZH (ZH 5:335–45) states that there were ten prisoners, four of whom were not Baha’is but were arrested because they were in the area working in the fields; one of these became a Baha’i during his imprisonment.

15. Moojan Momen, *The Bábī and Bahā’ī Religions, 1844–1944: Some Contemporary Western Accounts*, Oxford: George Ronald, 1980, 396.
16. ZH 6:982–4, 8b:814–7; Rida’i, Mahfuruzak 89–135; Isfahani, Gulpaygani, 267–77; A`zam ‘Alaviyān, *Bargī az Daftar-i Zindigī-yi Buzurg*, Montreal: privately published, 1991, 60–3 (account by Badī’ullāh Imani); Malik-Khusravī, *Tarikh Shuhada*, 3:410–22; Furūgh Arbāb, *Akhtarān-i Tabān*, vol. 1, 3rd printing, Delhi, 1999, 141–5.
17. ZH 6: 988–9, 8b: 808–9.
18. Rida’i, Mahfuruzak 102.
19. ZH 8b:806–8; Mahjuri, *Tarikh Mazandaran* 2:278.
20. Badī’ullāh Imani, ‘‘Ammih Qudsī’, *Payām-i Bahā’ī*, 340, March 2005, 42–8; Īqānī, ‘Madāris, 116–19.
21. Imani, ‘‘Ammih Qudsī’ 43.
22. ‘Alaviyan, *Bargī az Daftar* esp. 6–20.

Arminius Vámbéry and the Baha'i Faith

Miklós Sárközy *Institute of Ismaili Studies, London*

Abstract

There has been much debate about the mysterious life and complexities of the world-famous scholar, explorer and orientalist Arminius Vámbéry (1832–1913). During his long life he outlived many political and religious events, which markedly influenced his own personality. His encounters with different religions and religious identities are one of the most peculiar signs of his career. A unique character who equally came into contact with Judaism, Christianity and Islam though regularly regarding himself as an atheist, Vámbéry finally declared himself a follower of the Baha'i Faith in the last weeks of his life. The aim of this paper is to throw light on Vámbéry's contacts with Baha'is, his perceptions on this religion and the reasons that led him to fully embrace this faith at the end of his life.

Keywords

Arminius Vámbéry
religion
science
Hungarian identity
international role
religious identity

Born as Hermann Wamberger and originating from a very poor and obscure Jewish family of Pozsonyszentgyörgy, Hungary (now Svätý Jur Slovakia)¹ he spent his childhood in Dunaszerdahely in extreme poverty (now Dunájska Streda, Slovakia).² By losing his father before his own birth and struggling with serious physical problems all his life (becoming the *obscure limping Jew* in some British sources), he quickly lost his confidence in religions. Albeit later he converted to Protestantism (being a formal member of the Hungarian Reformed Church) and in his trips in Central Asia and Persia he was officially accepted as a Sunni dervish called Reshid Effendi,³ until the last year of his life he never embraced any religion wholeheartedly. 'As for me, I am an enemy of every positive religion'⁴ the sceptic Vámbéry stated in one of his memoirs.

Self-taught in science and having experienced many hardships in life, Vámbéry often surprised his audience and readers with his revolutionary ideas. Never enjoying the fruits of a traditional academic career, lacking any degree (including graduation from grammar school)⁵ he rose to the position of university professor by his own fame, by his practical experience of many oriental countries, as well as through his vast knowledge of numerous Turkic languages and Persian. However, his skill in speaking and reading in different ancient and contemporary oriental languages did not mean that he could conceal his failures in traditional linguistics at any time. He had many opponents in the field of linguistics in Hungarian and German academic circles. However, his clashes with Hungarian academic circles in the field of linguistics – his obvious failure to prove that Hungarian is closely related to the Turkic languages – were superseded by his much more important other works on oriental history and politics. His editions of various hitherto unknown manuscripts and primary sources are of paramount importance

since many of them were considered a real novelty at the time. The free thinker Vámbéry as a scholar was a complex character, the catholicity of his creativity and interest had no real boundaries within Middle Eastern studies, for this reason we suppose that there are different oeuvres of Vámbéry relating to Turcology, Hungarian prehistory, general Islamic history and contemporary events of the Islamic world.

Not only was Vámbéry an unusual and extraordinary personality, but his time and homeland were also undergoing significant changes. The historical milieu in Hungary surely influenced the young Vámbéry, who as a teenager became an ardent supporter of the Hungarian revolution against Habsburg absolutism, and later witnessed and lamented its defeat by the Russian Tsarist army in 1849. The roots of his Russophobia cannot be separated from these historical events. It was his Hungarian patriotism and his interest in Hungarian pre-history and not his otherwise very poor Jewish education that emboldened him to start to learn oriental languages, in sharp contrast with Goldziher, who, as a son of a rich Jewish merchant, enjoyed all the educational benefits of a well-to-do Jewish family. His passion for research in Hungarian pre-history – as one large part of his vast knowledge – remained a key element of his oeuvre until his death.

Vámbéry started his life as the son of an impoverished Jewish family in a remote Hungarian village and ended his career in a promising cosmopolitan metropolis, Budapest. Hungary, and Budapest itself in it, became entirely different between 1832 and 1913. It was a feudalistic backward country under Habsburg absolutism in the first half of the 19th century which, after many vicissitudes and tragedies, still succeeded in recovering, and in the framework of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy the Hungarian capital became a flourishing economic and cultural heart of Central Europe on the eve of World War I. Its population increased quickly, magnificent public buildings were erected, and its German and Jewish bourgeoisie started to be assimilated to the Hungarian majority. The life of Vámbéry was a good example of these social changes: he chose Hungarian identity and Christianity for his emancipation, and both of these represented a major step-up in his Hungarian career. Without these bold steps he could hardly have become a distinguished member of the Hungarian cultural elite. Before World War I, however, there appeared a new progressive wave of urban liberal intellectuals who looked after new ways of self-interpretation and tended to refuse the Hungarian national identity. Not surprisingly, however, the old dervish, as an extremely versatile character, joined them, and following various scientific and cultural debates Vámbéry somehow distanced himself from Hungarian nationalist ideas and as an old man built contacts with the founding fathers of Zionism.⁶

However, the endless complexity of Vámbéry does not end here. He, as a close friend and informant of the British and the Ottoman courts and governments, gained rapidly growing international fame from the 1860s. His explorations in Central Asia made him an important source of information, the huge number of his articles in newspapers, his books in English and German marked his growing international recognition as a well-known expert of contemporary Middle Eastern issues. One must also admit that he worked not only for the public, but also as an undercover agent for the British secret service, mainly against Russia. He became a very pro-British

and cosmopolitan character in every sense, who enthusiastically welcomed the glorious expansion of the British monarchy at its height of its power in the second half of the 19th century. As a free-minded secularized man, he regarded the British Empire as the ultimate embodiment of his own personal wishes.

Vámbéry's personal character was as complex as his scientific legacy, and many of its areas are still waiting to be rediscovered. He had a fascinating life with many junctures and little-known episodes. His reflections and contributions did not leave any important issues untouched regarding the Muslim world. His deep knowledge of religious movements is often referred to in many of his writings and speeches, and the question of the Baha'i case did not remain untouched by Vámbéry. On the basis of his rich oeuvre it is hardly surprising that Vámbéry left us rich material about the Baha'is, whose activity Vámbéry had the luck to follow for more than five decades from his travel to Persia in 1862 until the last breaths of his own life in 1913.

The Last Years of Vámbéry

A legendary and energetic character, Vámbéry did not cease to follow the actual historical events of the Middle East and the Islamic world even in his old days. Although he retired from teaching when he became 70 years old, opening the way for his pupils and the younger generation of Hungarian orientalists, he remained extremely active in the last decade of his life. The old dervish still travelled widely in Europe, maintaining his intimate contacts with the British royal family and intelligentsia as well as with the Ottoman court in Istanbul. Besides this, he used to spend his summer vacations in Tirol province in southern Austria joined by his wife Kornélia and sometimes by his son, Ruzstem, and Ruzstem's family.

He remained very active in scientific terms also, since he produced numerous treatises and books even in the last decades of his life, living in his third-floor flat in the former Emperor Francis Joseph Alley with its fine panoramic view on the opposite side of the Danube river and the Buda hills. We can mention three monographs written by Vámbéry in his latest period. His famous autobiography, *The Struggles of My Life* was first published in 1904 (first in English, then in Hungarian), containing many detailed stories and legendary adventures about his life.⁷ The *Western Culture in Eastern Lands* (in English and Hungarian), another influential and voluminous treatise on the future of different areas of the Islamic world and the role of western powers in its development, was published in 1906.⁸ His last independent volume, *At the Cradle of the Hungarians* (in Hungarian), was edited and published posthumously in 1914, the year following his death. According to the foreword by his son, the manuscript was discovered near the deathbed of Vámbéry.⁹

Ruzstem Vámbéry, his only son, recalls in the foreword of Esslemont's book on the Baha'i Faith that his father regularly had oriental guests in his flat even in the presence of other family members.¹⁰ Private life and public activity, along with devotion to Oriental studies, were hardly separated in Vámbéry's mind. He was regularly a host to distinguished and less famous visitors from various areas of the Islamic world, both privately and in the presence of the public. Since his fame had spread even to the Islamic world

through various newspapers and translations of his own travelogues, some of his oriental guests visited and honoured him just out of curiosity and to admire his extraordinary linguistic skills. For instance, two Qājār rulers, Nāser al-Dīn¹¹ and Mozaffar al-Dīn¹² in 1889 and in 1900 were both escorted by Vámbéry, and to their great astonishment and satisfaction Vámbéry worked as their Persian interpreter during the days they spent in Budapest. Vámbéry's last famous appearance in Hungarian society occurred when another famous oriental celebrity paid a visit to Budapest. He was 'Abdu'l-Baha the spiritual leader of the Baha'i community in April 1913, who visited the Hungarian capital a few months before Vámbéry's death.

April 1913: The Visit of 'Abdu'l-Baha in Budapest

Although the first accounts and reports about the Babis and their subsequent persecution were published as early as 1852 in Hungary (then being part of the Austrian Empire), the Baha'i Faith became widely known in Hungary when its third spiritual leader 'Abdu'l-Baha arrived in Budapest in 1913. The Hungarian capital was visited by 'Abdu'l-Baha after a long and exhausting trip to Europe and North America. Since this visit of 'Abdu'l-Baha in Budapest is particularly well documented due to the excellent articles of György Léderer¹³ and through the efforts of the Hungarian Baha'i community,¹⁴ which collected vast materials about the first ever visit of a leading Baha'i personality in Hungary, let us focus on the most crucial moments of this journey.

'Abdu'l-Baha spent nearly nine days in Budapest between 9 and 18 April 1913. He was invited by Lipót (Leopold) Stark, the head of the Hungarian Society for Theosophy, and by the Catholic prelate Sándor (Alexander) Gieswein.¹⁵ Besides this small group of theosophists, he was warmly welcomed by other intellectual groups of the Hungarian upper classes, such as Hungarian Esperantists and early Hungarian feminists.

Besides these progressive and modernist elites of the Hungarian capital, 'Abdu'l-Baha was invited to hold a lecture at a session organized by the Hungarian Society of Turanism, where he was introduced as a prominent representative of the Orient. This society, as its name 'Turan' suggests, emphasized the supposedly Asiatic and non-Uralic origins of the Hungarians and supported every movement which could contribute to their ideas. In 1913 the Hungarian Society for Turan was headed by Arminius Vámbéry. Although his writings and speeches hardly reflect any influence or inclination towards Turanism, the fact that an oriental celebrity with a Turco-Persian background had arrived in Budapest, as well as 'Abdu'l-Baha's exotic appearance, his long white beard and his messianic prophecies, and also his Persian entourage, significantly contributed to his invitation to the Hungarian Society of Turan.¹⁶

During his stay in Budapest even some leading Hungarian politicians like Count Albert Apponyi looked for the companionship of 'Abdu'l-Baha. Apponyi invited him to his private palace, thus paying tribute to the head of the Baha'i Faith in Budapest. Most of the Hungarian newspapers and periodicals covered his activity in Budapest and, albeit not without some sense of sensation and exaggeration, they usually treated this visit with much interest and friendship. In sum, the visit of 'Abdu'l-Baha was a very important cultural and social event in the life of Budapest only one year before World War I.

'Abdu'l-Baha himself was greatly inspired by the friendly atmosphere with which he was surrounded by leading circles of the Hungarian capital. He once said here that Budapest would be the place where East and West would soon meet and he expressed his hope that the Baha'i Faith would eventually be firmly rooted in Hungary and the Faith would get new inspirations through this unique city. According to the *Star of West* 'Abdu'l-Baha proclaimed at the end of his fruitful visit that 'Budapest will be the place where East and West will be unified from where light will spread towards other places'.¹⁷

Beyond the above-mentioned various groups, Hungarian orientalists were also exceedingly fascinated by the arrival of 'Abdu'l-Baha in Budapest. 'Abdu'l-Baha – an Ottoman citizen of Persian origin who spoke fluently Persian, Turkish and Arabic, with his exotic appearance and Turco-Persian entourage, as well as with his revolutionary ideas, evidently aroused the interest of all the leading scholars of Hungarian orientalistics. Both older scholars, such as Goldziher and Vámbéry, and younger rising stars like Gyula Germanus and Ignác Kúnos met 'Abdu'l-Baha in Budapest. By the time 'Abdu'l-Baha arrived in Budapest, he was a well-known personality, and this fact also encouraged these scholars to make personal contacts with 'Abdu'l-Baha. Some of these scholars, because of their Jewish background, perhaps felt more personal sympathy towards the liberal ideas of 'Abdu'l-Baha as regards religious freedom and human rights.¹⁸ Regarding political issues it is well known that both Goldziher and Vámbéry were strongly attached to classical liberalism and were outspoken proponents of these ideas in the contemporary Hungarian political and cultural life.

Meetings of 'Abdu'l-Baha with Hungarian orientalists

'Abdu'l-Baha's first encounter with prominent Hungarian orientalists was a failure, however. A committee of the municipality of Budapest consisting of politicians as well as senior officials and orientalists including the Turkologist Ignác Kúnos and Arabist Gyula Germanus confused the railway stations. They were waiting for 'Abdu'l-Baha at the Eastern Railway Station of Budapest, while his train from Vienna arrived at the Western Railway Station of the Hungarian capital.

Germanus, however, apologized for this mistake two days later when he, with his students who studied the Turkish language at the Oriental Commercial Academy where Germanus was appointed to the professorship of Eastern Languages, visited the Baha'i spiritual leader in his residence in the Ritz Hotel. 'Abdu'l-Baha and Germanus exchanged their ideas in Turkish and at the end of their conversation 'Abdu'l-Baha expressed his hopes that East and West would soon unite and he explained to his audience that East and West do not exist in reality, since every place can be interpreted as eastern or western.

In the same evening of 11 April, 'Abdu'l-Baha held a lecture in the building of the former Hungarian Parliament (today the Institute of Italian Culture). Here more than five hundred people attended his lecture whose title was 'Peace between nations and religions'. Martha Root, the well-known Baha'i missionary, recalled this noble event some twenty years later:

Standing next to him Prelate Gieswein introduced the great holy Persian scholar to the audience. And when professor Goldzieher [*sic*] stood at his right

side, the audience broke into a spontaneous burst of applause, since everybody felt the symbolic meaning of this scene, when they saw the representatives of three world religions hand in hand, the senior Catholic prelate, the famous Jewish Orientalist, and the enthusiastic leader of the Baha'i movement. Those who stood between the Catholic high priest and the Jewish Orientalist felt, although they did not understand it consciously, that this meant the reconciliation of two world religions. 'Abdu'l-Baha symbolized the peace of these two religions. Every chair was reserved in that hall, even the balconies and the corridors were full of people and there were attendants also outside the building. The audience represented 'Abdu'l-Baha's teaching about the unity of mankind. Members of Parliament, members of philosophical and philological societies, university professors, artists, Catholic and Anglican priests, representatives of modern religious movements, feminist organizations, esperantists, different nations and races were present that night.¹⁹

Mirza Mahmud-i Zarqani, who wrote an important travelogue about the journeys of 'Abdu'l-Baha, gives a similar detailed account of this lecture of 'Abdu'l-Baha in his *Kitāb-i Badāyi' u'l-Āthār*.²⁰

The famous Arabist, Ignaz Goldziher not only showed publicly some sympathy towards 'Abdu'l-Baha, but he also expressed his admiration towards him privately when the Baha'i leader was hosted by Goldziher. According to our sources, 'Abdu'l-Baha visited Goldziher's home a few hours before his speech in the former Hungarian Parliament. Goldziher had some theoretical knowledge about the Baha'i Faith even before 'Abdu'l-Baha's visit, since he had a copy of the *Al-Kitāb al-Aqdas*, one of the most important texts of Baha'i theology in his private library, which he showed his guest at his home. Later 'Abdu'l-Baha remained in an intensive correspondence with Goldziher. A few months later, after his return to Egypt on June 1913, he had a carpet sent to Goldziher through his son-in-law Mirza Ahmad Yazdi, who was a rich carpet merchant, for which Goldziher returned thanks to 'Abdu'l-Baha.

Besides the aforementioned Hungarian orientalists, 'Abdu'l-Baha paid particular attention to the meetings with Arminius Vámbéry. Our data suggests that they met personally two or three times in Budapest between 9 and 18 April. Among the leading Hungarian orientalists and prominent members of the Hungarian intelligentsia, perhaps Vámbéry showed the strongest sympathy towards the Baha'is, which he enthusiastically expressed to his Baha'i visitors. But before going into details of these historic meetings between Vámbéry and 'Abdu'l-Baha and their fascinating consequences, it is important to see the views and reflections Vámbéry had relating to the Bahá'i movement during his long life.

Vámbéry and his Views About the Babi/Baha'i Movement Before 1913

The views of Vámbéry on the Baha'is were as complex as the main events of his life. During the fifty years he observed the rising Baha'i community many times he also expressed his opinions about them. As we will see, there is long and difficult way from his early notices about the Baha'is until his full embracement of the Baha'i Faith.

We find his first reflections in 1868 when he published his famous Persian travelogue in German and Hungarian. The *Meine Wanderungen and*

Erlebnisse in Persien is mainly written for the general public in a simple and entertaining style and depicts the Qajar Persia under Naser al-Din Shah. Beyond the travelogue itself, which gives a vivid, albeit quite sarcastic and often critical description of Persia, Vámbéry wrote a detailed epilogue to the book summarizing the country's history, social institutions, politics, ethnic and religious minorities and historical sights. Here we can find his first ever report about the Babi movement. The fact that Vámbéry dedicated more than twenty pages to the history of the Babi movement clearly shows that he felt the importance of the nascent new religious community as early as 1868. His lengthy description covers the life of the Bab, his teachings, his early followers and finally his torture and martyrdom. At the end of the first ever biography of the Bab published in Hungarian Vámbéry expresses his personal opinions about the Babi movement.

Ich habe während meines Aufenthaltes in Persien Vieles von dem Kanun (Gesetzbuch) der neuen Sekte sprechen gehört, welches Bab selbst haben soll und von dem eine ächte Kopie sich in der Königlichen Bibliothek zu Teheran befindet. So wie die Bücher selbst daher nur in Verborgenheit gehalten worden, so schwebt auch die eigentliche Wiessenschaft der neuen Lehre ein dichter Nebel. Der Eine behauptet, Bab hätte Kommunismus gepredigt, den Koran gezeugnet und die Institutionen des Islams gänzlich über den Haufen geworfen. Andere gehen noch weiter und erzählen, dass ein juste milieu zwischen den Lehren der altpersischen und christlichen Religion schaffen wollte; am allerwahrscheinlichsten aber dünkt mir jene Version, nach welcher Bab die Prophetenreihe, die Mohamed aufgestellt war, gutheissen, sich nur in so fern von ihm unterscheidet, dass er den arabischen Religionsstifter nicht den letzten der Propheten nennt, sondern die Fortsetzung der von jeher von Zeit zu Zeit eintretenden göttlichen Missionen für nothwendig halt, und da die Menschheit seit Mohamed schon wider ins grosse Mehr der Sündern versunken ist, so hat Gott es wohl befunden, nun ihm eine Mission der Verbesserung und Belehrung anzuvertrauen.

(300–1 *Wanderungen*)²¹

Ein buntes Gemisch daher von Gutem und Schlechtem, von Bizarrem und Merkwürdigem ist es, was das heilige Buch der Babi's enthält. Auf mich hat Bab sowohl als seine Lehre Alles, nur nicht den Eindruck einer Ernst gemeinten Reform, einer wirklichen Begeisterung machen können. In meinem jahrelangen Verkehr mit den Orientalen habe ich es gefunden, wie im Laufe dieser Blätter oft bemerkt wird, das seine grosse Neigung, von dem einen Extrem in das ander zu fallen, bei ihnen vorherrschend ist. Während der Zeit, die ich in Konstantinopel verlebte, sind zwei derartige Propheten aufgetreten. Beide wurden von der mehr wachsamem türkischen Regierung sogleich arretirt und beseitigt. In allen Theilen des dem Islam gehörigen Landes tauchen von Zeit zu Zeit einige erhitzte Köpfe auf, die mit dem Aufgebot ihrer reichen Phantasie auf kurze Zeit die öffentlich Meinung in anspruch nehmen. In einer Periode der Anarchie ist es ihnen viel leichter sich Bekehrte zu schaffen, doch wo nur rein Schatten der Regierung ist, werden sie, als gefährlich der bestehenden Ordnung, beseitigt und vernichtet.²²

As it is clear from the above-mentioned passages, Vámbéry's opinion is full of scepticism concerning the Babi movement in the 1860s. Despite all

his reservations, however, he acknowledges his limited knowledge about the Babi movement due to the lack of access to essential Babi sources. Vámbéry admits that he had only sketchy data about the holy scripts of the Babis when he says that he heard many times about the 'Kanun' of the Babis which he considers the holy book of the Babis, admitting that there are many uncertainties and ambiguities about the holy books of the Babis. Since he had no opportunity to study essential Babi sources, his often superficial information was based on the news he could acquire throughout his travels in Persia, based primarily on his personal experiences relying on rumours and some unknown informants. It is probable that he met Babis during his stay in Persia but none of them are named in his travelogue. A greater part of his information about the Babis comes from Arthur Gobineau's book (*Les Religions et Les Philosophies dans l'Asie central*) published in 1866.²³ As far as the ideological background of the Babis is concerned, Vámbéry's uncertainty and limited knowledge is clearly visible when he compares the Babi ideology to Communism or when he suggests pre-Islamic influences in their theology.

Albeit he confessed his weakness in Babi studies, it seems that Vámbéry did not take the Babi movement very seriously in 1868 when the *Wanderungen* was published. In his eyes the Babi movement was an unimportant community led by 'erhitzte Köpfe' i.e. 'hectic minds'. Not without certain sarcasm, Vámbéry regards the Babis as a habitual and ordinary occurrence of oriental exaggeration and imagination or naivety. He, however, took the opportunity to lash out against the weak Qajar government using the Babis as a pretext to demonstrate the weakness and incompetence of the Qajars, who were not even able to destroy such an insignificant movement as that of the Babis, in comparison with the stronger and more competent Ottoman government. He regards the appearance of the Babi movement as nothing more than a certain kind of disorder of the Qajar state. As a symptom of the inner problems of the Qajar government in the eyes of Vámbéry, they were hardly interpreted as a core of proponents of a new religion which would eventually exert a significant influence on the Middle East. Be that as it may, Vámbéry had mixed feelings regarding the Babis in the summary of the *Wanderungen*.

It would be, however, unjust to emphasize only the negative elements of the young Vámbéry's opinion about the Babis. Despite all of his scepticism, he noted many promising and positive teachings of the Bab in the *Wanderungen*. For instance, Vámbéry mentions that Babis emphasized the social equality of women as well as the needlessness of the *chador*.

In sum, Vámbéry's attitude towards the Babis contained a great deal of reservations in 1868. The young Vámbéry considered them a sign of disorder of Qajar Persia and a result of 'Oriental character and extremism' – not concealing his harsh criticism against the Qajars and the Persians in general in contrast with the more enlightened or 'civilized' Ottoman government. Thus the negative opinion of Vámbéry about the Babis can be understood as part of his general view of Persia and the Persians. Vámbéry expresses his ambiguities about the Persians and the Persian identity on every page of the *Wanderungen*. Calling the Persians 'the most timid people in Asia'²⁴ or 'clever children who fail to grow up',²⁵ he often compares their supposed childishness, religious fanaticism as well as their hypocritical and capricious behaviour to that of the more rationalistic and more westernized

Ottomans. We must take into account that Vámbéry was strongly Turkicized in Istanbul between 1857 and 1862. For the rest of his life, Ottoman society remained his favourite among Muslim countries and Vámbéry became a strong supporter of Ottoman policy, culture and society. No doubt his positive experiences and his success among Ottoman aristocrats clearly influenced his opinions. Ottomans, as the most westernized and modernized Muslims, were highly respected by Vámbéry. His personal convictions coincided with his pro-British political allusions which also supported the Ottomans against the mighty Tsarist Empire in the great game of Asia. In comparison with the more enlightened Ottoman society, Persia and its institutions were far less preferred by Vámbéry. He appreciated Persians in many ways, respecting their keen interest in discovering the modern world, admired their magnificent monuments giving lengthy descriptions about Isfahan, Shiraz and Persepolis, but at the same time condemned them for their fanatical, irrational or childish character. Persia was indeed less westernized than its eternal rival and counterpart on the shores of the Bosphorus, and this fact induced Vámbéry to criticize the Persian state harshly, not sparing any negative comment regarding daily life and provisions in Persia. Thus the critical notes on the Babis by Vámbéry can be interpreted as part of his immense criticism against the Persian state. The Babis, predominantly Persian in Vámbéry's time, cast in their lot with the rest of Persia. Vámbéry suggested that their appearance, the popular social excitement they caused and the supposed 'irrational' inner character of the early Babi community could be deducted from the general Persian identity which lacked any trace of rational elements and which coveted mysticism and emotions in its most cathartic form in every moment. On the other hand, the persecution and martyrdom of many Babis were signs of disability and backwardness of the weak Qajar rule under Naser al-Din Shah in Vámbéry's eyes.

The Influence of Browne and the Reinterpretation of the Babis/Baha'is (1892)

Vámbéry's second significant reflection concerning the Babis/Baha'is can be dated from 1892. This time his comments were published in *The Academy*, a scientific periodical of England. Between 1868 and 1892 there are no traces of any important note about the Baha'is in Vámbéry's otherwise huge number of scholarly works. In 1892, however, he published a review about a book by E. G. Browne (*A Traveller's Narrative Written to Illustrate the Episode of the Bab*, Cambridge, 1891).²⁶

In this volume E. G. Browne, the famous British orientalist, describes the life of the Bab and translates an early Baha'i source about the Babis. Browne's book about the Babi/Baha'i movement consists of two volumes. The first is the description of the Babi movement, while the second is the publication and translation of the original Persian text. Browne wrote a lengthy epilogue to his work, in which he summarized the teachings of the Baha'i Faith. Browne, who maintained close relations with Baha'u'llah and his followers, regularly visiting them in the Ottoman Empire, had a significant role and enormous influence in introducing the Baha'i Faith in Western Europe. His volume was perhaps the most important step towards the emancipation of the Baha'is in European culture and surely contributed to the spread of Baha'i teachings in non-Middle Eastern societies.

Beyond the appreciation of Browne's efforts in the field of Baha'i studies, Vámbéry in his review speaks much more favourably about the Babi/Baha'i movement, emphasizing mainly the progressive, modernist and emancipationist tendencies of this religion.

There is hardly a Christian ecclesiastic in Europe, and still less in England, who would give proof of such a liberal spirit of toleration; and considering the ruling tendencies of our times, when Church and State are anxious to strengthen the religious edifice by a deliberate widening of the gulf existing between various creeds and sects, it is surely an object of just admiration to find a Mohammedan and a Shi'ite into the bargain surpassing the Christian leaders of our enlightened nineteenth century. Of course the great question remains – how far these opinions are shared by the followers of this founder of a new religion, and whether there is any hope of propagating such doctrines among Mohammedans in general and Persians in particular. As to the former, I cannot pass any judgement at present, being ignorant how far at present the religion of Báb has yet extended. With regard to the second question, I believe that nobody who is thoroughly acquainted with the mind and passions of mankind in the East will nourish hope that the above liberal ideas will take root in the soil of Asia, notoriously fertile of religious ecstasies, or that the separation wall of religions, which there replaces that of nationalities, will be so easily removed. No! That is a sheer impossibility and the doctrines of Beha, however noble and sublime, must be looked upon as the personal conviction of that really great man and of a few of his followers, but not as the doctrine of the whole sector as the future religion of Mohammedans in Persia. I would go even further, and say that a religion proclaiming absolute equality among all creeds and ignoring national differences among mankind could hardly find followers even in civilized Europe, where similar principles have remained up to the present the device of a few enlightened men. Whether these thoroughly liberal views of Sheikh Beha are derived from a deep insight into European affairs or from personal contacts with Europeans living in the East, is a question that is not so easily answered.²⁷

By 1892 the Baha'i community became almost completely independent from Shi'i Islam under its second great spiritual leader Baha'u'llah, and the number of Baha'i believers was steadily growing. By this period they were hardly perceived as an insignificant religious community in the eyes of Vámbéry and his contemporaries. Resettled in the Ottoman Empire from the 1860s, Baha'is won the favour of both the Ottomans and the British to a certain degree, although their relationship was not without problems. Browne, who as both an orientalist and a private man showed sympathy towards them, had great merits in the positive evaluation of the Baha'is in the West. From the 1880s until his own death in 1924, a significant portion of his scientific output dealt with Baha'i subjects. Besides, by 1892 Vámbéry had become a well-known member of the British elite having close contacts with the court of Queen Victoria and leading British orientalist circles, and it is well known that Browne and Vámbéry also maintained a close friendship with each other. Their mutual personal respect also emboldened Vámbéry to look at the Baha'is more favourably than thirty years before.

Vámbéry became quite receptive and enthusiastic regarding the successes of the Baha'is. By 1892 he compared their humanistic ideas to those of the European Enlightenment. We must note, however, that Vámbéry was rather fascinated by their social and political beliefs, their struggle for social and religious equality, more or less neglecting the religious core of the Baha'i Faith. When assessing Vámbéry's thoughts about religious life, we must take into account that Vámbéry never felt sympathy towards any kind of religious liturgy and theology, often ridiculing Jewish, Christian and Islamic traditions in his different works. Therefore the fact that the main emphasis was laid on the social issues of Baha'i teachings is hardly surprising.

It is also of worth noting that Vámbéry defines the Baha'i Faith as 'a new religion' whereas for many contemporaries it was quite unclear whether Baha'is represented a new faith or a progressive way of thinking of Islam. In this sense even the Baha'is seemed to be divided, since until 1935 they were allowed to hold membership in other religious communities.²⁸ As for the way of success of this young religion, a great deal of pessimism is also preserved in Vámbéry's opinion regarding the success of the Baha'is. Albeit acknowledging and welcoming the modernist Baha'i ideas, he found them too utopistic and in a quite frank manner expressed his doubts regarding the possibilities of their re-implementation in the Middle East, in particular among the Persians. Here the motif of the untrustworthy Persian character occurs again, as in the *Wanderungen* in 1868. But Vámbéry goes further, thinking that the ideas laid out by Baha'u'llah are in a premature state even by European standards. Therefore he hails Baha'u'llah's bravery and courage perceiving that all the humanistic and egalitarian ideas are mainly of his personal convictions, in which even his followers cannot believe completely. In sum there is a significant change in his views concerning the Baha'is.

Despite questioning the future of the Baha'is, Vámbéry entirely reassessed his earlier opinions. The thorough study of Browne's work helped him to have direct access to Baha'i primary sources, which had not been at his disposal before. This fact is reinforced by my investigation of the volume that Vámbéry used for writing his review about Browne's book. The tome owned by Vámbéry is currently preserved in the Oriental Collection of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in Budapest, where the private library of Vámbéry was transferred after his death in 1913. The two-volume book was the personal present of Browne to Vámbéry, as attested by the bilingual Persian–English dedication on the first page of the first volume. At the end of the second volume we can find Vámbéry's review, stuck in together with another Browne relic, a greeting letter sent by Browne in which he returned thanks for Vámbéry's warm words written in his review. It is very likely that Vámbéry showed 'Abdu'l-Baha the same edition of Browne's work in 1913 when the latter visited him at his home in Budapest.²⁹

Vámbéry's Perceptions About the Baha'i Faith in *Western Culture in Eastern Lands* (1906)

In 1906 Vámbéry published a voluminous essay about the possible future of Islam in the 20th century. In this huge and voluminous late work Vámbéry thoroughly described the contemporary political and social institutions of

different areas of the Islamic world along with the process of westernization, European influences from the ailing Ottoman Empire through Persia and Central Asia to India. Vámbéry's lengthy essay was published both in English and in Hungarian. Here we can find some important passages relating to the Baha'is and some reflections on his own earlier notes on the Baha'i Faith as well as some surprising new and deeply personal elements in Vámbéry's Baha'i image. The free thinker Vámbéry markedly resurfaced his ideas on the Baha'is. Not for the first time and not for the last, either.

The motives and actions of these Babis have always been misunderstood in Europe, and have only lately been shown in their right light by Professor G. Browne. The basis of their endeavours has been from the first the establishment of law and order in the State, the abolition of the tyrannical arbitrariness, and the mitigation of existing barbarous customs. The Moslemic prophetic revelation was only a pretext for certain innovations, such as the abolition of harem laws, a fair distribution of taxes, limitation of the power of the Mollahs, and liberation of the masses; and how strong the influence of the West has been upon these proposed reforms is clearly visible from the spiritual writings of the spiritual head of Babism, now living in exile. Babism – at one time supposed to be a dangerous religious movement, inciting the most flagrant fanaticism and carried on with great enthusiasm – was in spite of its outward character merely a violent struggle against the barbarity and cruelty of the Government. Whether Mirza Mohammed Ali of Shiraz – afterwards called Bab, the founder of this religious movement – acted upon the principles above indicated would be difficult to prove, notwithstanding the strong communistic tendencies attributed to him. But it is certain that his successors soon changed their attitude of dogmatism for one of political and social reform, and the present head of that portion of the Babis known as section Bahai, in his epistles, touches cords which remind one rather of our democratic leaders and socialists than of the admonitions of pious Mohammedan Sheikhs. These religionists have hitherto been much misunderstood in Europe, but Edward G. Browne has given us an insight into their thoughts and aspirations which comes as a revelation to those who know Asia, and especially Persia. Sheikh Bahai, now in exile at Cyprus, in his history of the Bab revolution, treats religious matters as of secondary importance, but lays the greater stress on the political and social questions of the Iranian people, and on the general deterioration, which he takes to be the natural outcome of the wicked tyranny of the Persian Government. Anyone familiar with the situation in Moslem Asia must be surprised to see how this religious leader, the head of a sect, does not hesitate to base his argument for liberty, fraternity and equality, on the past and the present history of the Christian West.³⁰

Anyone who has any knowledge of the Moslem world must be struck by these views, this language of Sheikh Bahai, and all his works abound in pithy remarks of a similar nature. During many years of intercourse and correspondence with persons of all classes of society in various parts of Moslem Asia, I have never found any quite so advanced as he is. I have on the contrary, noticed that both to the secular and the spiritual heads of the Moslem world the recognition of Europe was always more or less an act of self-denial or humiliation. However far advanced in Western culture, however familiar with the prevailing ideas of

the nineteenth century, Turks, Persians, Arabs, and Hindus find it difficult to speak of the civilization of Europe in terms of appreciation and to recognise it as the only means by which mankind can be truly benefited. Liberal thoughts, equal rights for all religions and all peoples, views which in Europe still belong to the *pia desideria* appeared to me forty years ago quite beyond the reach of Asiatics; and even admitting that Sheikh Bahai possibly still stands alone in the views which he expresses in a letter to the King of Persia urging him to desist from tyranny, we gladly recognise in him a *signum temporis*, and welcome him as an earnest of the influence of the West upon the East. It is doubtful whether the followers of Bab have imbibed any of the advanced notions of their present chief, but the possibility is not excluded that his doctrines may spread, and in the future have a large circle of influence.³¹

In *Western Culture in Eastern Lands* we can find the most important and most long-lasting comments of Vámbéry about the Baha'is.³² As for the content of this essay published first in German and later in English, Vámbéry's perception about the Baha'is is again modified and further developed in comparison with his 1892 stance, containing both old and new elements.

It is interesting to see a certain amount of self-criticism in the first lines, reflecting on his own views of a few decades earlier. In other passages we find the reiteration of those thoughts he had written some fifteen years before in his book review of Browne's *Travelogue*. There is one important difference, however, between his former opinion, expressed in his review, and these lines. Vámbéry now rather assesses the Baha'is as a possible Muslim reform movement rather than as an independent religion, contrary to the thoughts he had expressed in his review in the Academy. In other passages Vámbéry again underlined the social and political importance of the Baha'i Faith as a possible remedy for Muslims in the Middle East, and, as in 1892, he again stressed the social and modernizing impact of the Baha'i church rather than its religious values. Albeit Vámbéry again drew a visible distinction between the abilities and ideas of Baha'u'llah and his followers in his analysis, and expressed some doubts concerning the success of the Baha'is, one feels that his reservations are much more limited in comparison with those of 1892. By 1906 Vámbéry had become much more optimistic regarding the future of the Baha'i Faith.

Otherwise there is another sentence in the Hungarian version in which Vámbéry defines the rising Baha'i Faith and its believers as the influence and penetration of western culture in the East. It is not exactly known what lies behind these lines. Is it a rather general reference to his classical liberal ideas which he intended to be implemented in the Middle East or a clear indication of his real Baha'i contacts he had in the Ottoman Empire or in London?

The Hungarian translation goes even further where Vámbéry hails the Baha'i emergence as his personal merit: '*És ha Bahaj seikh ezen elvekkel magában áll is, örömmel látjuk benne az idők jelét s üdvözljük őt, mint keleti befolyásunk egyik gyümölcset.*'³³ literally meaning: '*and even if Sheikh Bahai still stands alone with these views, we gladly recognise in him a signum temporis, and welcome him as a fruit of our influence upon the East.*' Meanwhile in the English version it is written: '*and even Sheikh Bahai possibly still stands alone in the views we gladly recognise in him a signum temporis, welcome him as*

an earnest of the influence of the West upon the East.' We do not know it exactly whether this is the error of the Hungarian translator or a deliberate change in the Hungarian edition referring to Vámbéry's otherwise unknown Babi/Baha'i contacts in the Ottoman Empire. Later, in a letter addressed to 'Abdu'l-Baha in 1913, Vámbéry hinted that he had personally become acquainted with Baha'u'llah in Ottoman territory in the past, but as he did not go into further details about this meeting, that is all we can presume. It remains unclear when and how Vámbéry could have met Baha'is in Istanbul or in other places. Given the fact that he regularly visited Istanbul even in his older days, it is quite probable that he held contacts with Baha'i circles there.

Meetings of Vámbéry and 'Abdu'l-Baha in April 1913

When Vámbéry and 'Abdu'l-Baha met in Budapest in 1913, Vámbéry was fully aware of the importance of the Baha'i Faith since he had been following their history for more than fifty years. The old and retired but still energetic Vámbéry was quite excited when hearing about the arrival of 'Abdu'l-Baha and his entourage, and despite his minor health problems he was eager to meet his distinguished guest in Budapest. As for Vámbéry, he could be especially motivated to meet 'Abdu'l-Baha since in 1913 he was more than 80 years old and had lost nearly all of his influential friends both in Istanbul and in London. Although he was still active and travelled widely, his possibilities to appear before the Hungarian public as an internationally respected expert of the Islamic world had become quite rare by 1913. No doubt the arrival of 'Abdu'l-Baha and his Persian entourage with their unmistakably oriental dress offered a unique occasion for Vámbéry to come into view. It is clear that the two men had had no personal contacts before, and there is no indication of their previous personal meetings or correspondence. Despite the fact that 'Abdu'l-Baha had spent decades in custody in Acre in relative isolation, he and his advisers had exact information about Vámbéry's activity and actively sought the company of the respected old dervish. According to our sources Vámbéry and 'Abdu'l-Baha met at least twice in Budapest in 1913 on 12 and 14 April. Both meetings occurred at Vámbéry's home where 'Abdu'l-Baha visited the old scholar. Léderer indicated that Vámbéry wanted to reciprocate the visits of 'Abdu'l-Baha in the Hotel Ritz, but this appointment was cancelled due to unknown reasons. Yet Vámbéry's son, Rusztem, had written a vivid narrative as an eyewitness about the first visit of 'Abdu'l-Baha at his father's home in 1933.

It is twenty years since a visitor was announced at my late father's home which stood on the bank of the Danube River. Since my early childhood I got used to meeting with Turkish, Tatar, Persian and Hindu pilgrims at my father's home on their way from East to West. But this visitor had an extraordinary appearance. A tall man, with a slightly bent back due to his high age, with a white beard and with fiery dark eyes from whose benevolent light the persuading power of faith and knowledge glowed. I did not understand his words – they were speaking Persian with my father – but I did understand his personality, in whose irresistible magic the consciousness of apostolic calling was reflected. After two decades I still recall the magnificent appearance of 'Abdu'l-Baha as a living reality in my memories, who as the eldest

son of Bahá' Allah, the founder of the universal Oriental faith, inherited the prophetic inspiration and mission in order to be the advocate of the unity of mankind, peace and social justice.³⁴

Their meeting was briefly reported in the *Star of West*, the famous Baha'i journal, in their obituary of Vámbéry. The *Star of West* quotes excerpts from the diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab who was a member of 'Abdu'l-Baha's entourage during his journey to Budapest and perhaps he was also present at these meetings with Vámbéry.

During the visit of 'Abdul-Baha to Budapest, he met him (i.e. Vámbéry) twice, and once he called at the hotel to return the visit. His knowledge of Oriental languages, especially Persian, Arabic and Turkish, was amazing.

He was a pleasant-looking old man, rather short of stature and with wrinkled face on account of his great age. In the course of conversation with 'Abdul-Baha, he said: '*For many years have I been following your teachings, and ever longed to meet you. I admire more than anything else your supreme courage, that at this advanced age you have left everything and are traveling all over the world to spread your humane principles. You are doing a great work. Your work will be crowned with success because your sincerity, unwavering faith and high ideals have stamped themselves upon the minds of the world's thinkers.*' His last words as 'Abdul-Baha bade him farewell in his drawing-room and library were these: 'I hope to hear from you. Please, when you return to the East, send me the Writings and Treatises of your Father, and I will do everything to spread them in Europe. The more these principles are spread, the nearer will we be to the age of Peace and Brotherhood.'³⁵

Besides the *Star of West* it is important to have a look at the Persian travelogue of Zarqani which spoke highly about the personal meetings of Vámbéry and 'Abdu'l-Baha, mentioning both occasions when the famous orientalist and the Baha'i spiritual leader met. Of the two appointments this well-known Baha'i source emphasizes the importance of the first one in a very florid style.

And then he ('Abdu'l-Baha) left Nadler's house, for honouring he came to Vámbéry's home and these were among others the explanations which were said repeatedly that day by Vámbéry: 'I spent my life with travelling and journeys in various countries and so far I have not seen such an exceedingly merciful and publicly benevolent person full with virtues in the human world like you.' Truly the perfectness of this blessed existence and the teaching of these things are useful for the public, especially for the Oriental people and above all for the Muslims whose land and nation are in decline and their future position will inherit every kind of catastrophe and sadness. If there is hope for their protection there will be attention and recognizance for the (Baha'i) case.³⁶

All of our sources praise how enthusiastically Vámbéry greeted his distinguished Baha'i guest in his home. The context and the content are very similar when we compare the notes of Ruzstern Vámbéry with the remarks of Zarqani and Mirza Ahmad Sohrab in the *Star of the West*. All of them spoke highly of this meeting, using almost the same expressions.

There are two main elements in the descriptions which are common to the above-cited three – Persian, English and Hungarian – sources: the first one is that of Vámbéry's personal admiration of 'Abdu'l-Baha and his activity; another interesting and common aspect is Vámbéry's ardent hope and belief in the future and imminent success of the Baha'is. His true reverence for the Baha'i leader is soon expressed again in his letter written to 'Abdu'l-Baha a few months later; the expressions used by Vámbéry in his letter are very similar in style to those seen in the three above-mentioned sources. In Rusztem Vámbéry's account and in Zarqani's text Vámbéry recalls his travels and the personal experiences he had had in the Turco-Iranian world during the previous fifty years and his meeting with oriental people. This note is a forerunner of one important part of his later letter addressed to 'Abdu'l-Baha, in which he also repeated his former mixed experiences with various oriental religions which led him to the definite embracing of the Baha'i Faith, which he regarded as a possible solution to the Middle East's social and cultural problems. Another common element which one can find both in the *Star of the West* and in the remarks of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab as well as in Vámbéry's later letter addressed to 'Abdu'l-Baha is the blessing formula at the end of this letter which we can read in the remarks of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab.

The Letter of Vámbéry

After this historical meeting Vámbéry tried to preserve his cordial relations with the leadership of the Baha'i community. He was honoured by a tablet of 'Abdu'l-Baha and later 'Abdu'l-Baha's son-in-law Mirza Ahmad Yazdi sent him a carpet as was the case with Goldziher. On the basis of our data and of the correspondence of Goldziher with 'Abdu'l-Baha, these presents were sent to Goldziher and Vámbéry following the return of 'Abdu'l-Baha to Egypt on 17 June. Besides these gifts it is highly probable that 'Abdu'l-Baha sent one or two letters to Vámbéry as in the case of Goldziher, who also replied to these letters. However, most of the correspondence of 'Abdu'l-Baha and Vámbéry has not been preserved. We learnt from Martha Root that in 1929, when she visited Rusztem Vámbéry and his family in Budapest, she saw the letter(s) of 'Abdu'l-Baha addressed to Vámbéry, which were in the possession of Rusztem Vámbéry and preserved in his elegant villa on Gellért Hill. Unfortunately, to the best of our knowledge, nothing has been preserved from this correspondence in Budapest. Rusztem Vámbéry and his wife were forced to leave Hungary in 1938, their personal belongings were either brought with them to England or later to the United States of America, while other properties like the precious Turkish carpets and silver dishes, along with other written materials of Arminius Vámbéry, were possibly transferred to the British Embassy with which Rusztem Vámbéry had maintained close contacts. The then British Embassy building was later mostly destroyed and looted by the invading Red Army during the three-month siege of Buda Castle in 1944–5 in World War II. These factors hardly help us to rediscover the letters of 'Abdu'l-Baha written to Vámbéry. If there are places where the letter(s) of 'Abdu'l-Baha can be found, these are outside of Hungary, perhaps in London or in the United States.³⁷

However, one letter penned by Vámbéry, which he wrote to 'Abdu'l-Baha just a few weeks before his own death was preserved in Haifa in the archive

of the Baha'i World Centre. The copy of this hitherto unpublished letter was sent to me by courtesy of the Baha'i World Centre. Here I would like to express my gratitude to them for their generous help and kindness for sharing the copy of this historic letter.

This letter of Vámbéry to 'Abdu'l-Baha remains undated on the basis of the copy I was given, since there is no clear indication in it of when it was exactly written. However, with great probability it was sent to 'Abdu'l-Baha in the summer of 1913, a few weeks before Vámbéry's death. Even the *Egyptian Gazette*, which published its text in English for the first time, and Zarqani's travelogue, containing its Arabic translation, give no clue for the exact date of this letter. The *Egyptian Gazette*, however, published a letter to the editor from J. Stannard, which reveals interesting details about the circumstances of this letter of Vámbéry:

In view of the recent death of that distinguished scholar and orientalist, Arminius Vámbéry, I feel that the subjoined letter, sent only a few weeks before his death to 'Abdul-Baha (Abbas Effendi), becomes a historical document of worldwide interest and importance. This hitherto unpublished letter I am happily permitted to make public.

Written in Persian, its exquisite diction and courtesy reveal how thoroughly this wonderful scholar inherently understood the heart of the religious East and how fully he sympathized with all truly noble aims. To many, Vámbéry was perhaps known only as a brilliant and indefatigable anthropologist and researcher into hidden origins; to others, who know the infinite complexities of life and thought in the Near East, he meant a great deal more. His strenuously active life comprised more knowledge based on experience than is generally to be found in the career of three ordinary diplomatists. His linguistic attainments were remarkable, for he spoke and wrote over fifteen languages.

Naturally his judgment on men and things was therefore remarkable for its penetrative accuracy and shrewdness and for four years he worked as special adviser to the ex-Sultan, 'Abdul Hamid. A particularly hard youth, fought in such bewildering surroundings as Turkey, Persia and the Balkans present, gave him unequalled opportunities for observation and study.

Concerning religious philosophy he could enter into discussions with the best and especially on Islamic theology, whether Persian or Arabian, he spoke with an intimate and immediate knowledge that inspired great respect among the learned mullahs. Many are the biographical sketches that have appeared on this extraordinary genius from time to time in European reviews and now many more will be surely presented; but it may be doubted whether any will reveal the inner soul and high aspirations of this scholar at a ripe old age as do the contents of the following communication. We seem to feel the glow of a flame that flashed out from the heart of one who had always searched to find a great truth, a compelling conviction, and that this glad experience had finally been accorded and he was satisfied.

The memorable meeting between 'Abdul-Baha and the professor took place in Buda Pesth last April where the great Bahai Master met with an ovation on the part of scholars, orientalist and social reformers. On the return of 'Abdul-Baha to Egypt he wrote to Vámbéry, sending him a gift, and the following

letter was the reply. For the information of those who are unfamiliar with Eastern expressions I may add that the style is, in Islam, only adopted by the religiously learned and only used towards a supremely great teacher or leader.

Believe me, yours, etc.,

J. STANNARD.'

Ramleh, September 22.³⁸

In this introduction Mrs Stannard stated that the letter of Vámbéry reached 'Abdu'l-Baha right after the end of his great European trip. We are informed from the sources that covered the trips of 'Abdu'l-Baha that he returned to Egypt on 17 June 1913. That is why one can suppose that this letter was composed by Vámbéry between 17 June and the end of August 1913, although the exact date of this letter remains unknown. Stannard confirmed that the original letter had been written in Persian, which was later translated into both Arabic and English. The huge importance of the letter of Vámbéry in the eyes of the Baha'i leading circles is also emphasized by Zarqani, who informs us that the original Persian version was immediately translated into Arabic and English. Zarqani also publishes the letter of Vámbéry, but it is interesting to note that he pastes the Arabic and not the Persian original into his Persian text although he does know about the existence of the Persian letter.³⁹ The subsequent English translation was made probably by J. Stannard or one of her aides since she was the first to publish it on 21 September 1913 (six days after the death of Vámbéry). Later in 1933 a Hungarian translation was made in the foreword to Esslemont's book on the history of the Baha'i Faith, its text probably translated from the English version by Rusztem Vámbéry, who authored this foreword.

On the basis of the original Persian text, we will now try to make a new, more precise English translation, because we feel that the original Persian slightly differs from the first English version in some points.

I send this humble writing to his Excellency Mīrzā 'Abd al-Bahā'i [sic] 'Abbās, whose virtue and excellence is growing and who is well versed in science.

With Piety, Friendship, Humility and Obsequiousness, I sacrificed myself for you.

Your letter full of grace which you were kind to send to this servant of yours together with the prayer carpet have been unified with the thanksgiving hand and the time of meeting with Your Excellency who is full of blessings reappeared in the memory of the Least. I would like to see Your Excellency next time also. Really, although I travelled through so many countries and areas, so far I never encountered with such an essence of intelligence (*zāt-i fatānatāt*) like that of Your Excellency and let me say that such a person can hardly be found. For this reason I hope that the deeds and piety of your Excellency will result in goodness, since I see humanism (*insāniyat*) in these deeds and pieties rooted in goodness and nobleness.

This Least has already experienced the different religions from inside, i.e. outwardly I became Jew (*mūsavī*), Christian (*khrīstīān*), Muslim (*mohammadī*)

and Fire-worshipper (*ātašparast*). But in these religions I discovered nothing else but fight against each other and enmity. All of these religions became the means of tyranny and oppression in the hands of rulers and potentates thus resulting in the decadence of the world and of mankind. And when looking at this inefficacy, everybody must strive for the foundation of a universal religion (*dīn-i ʿumūmī*) in the future by being obliged to support your Excellency.

As for me, who has seen the honourable father of Your Excellency, I saw and admired the enthusiasm around him. I can do nothing but to signify piety and honour towards the orientation and the goals of Your Excellency. And if the Almighty God gives you long life, you will be successful in all events. This is what the Least wishes and desires from the depths of his heart.

The Least

Vámbéry⁴⁰

Regarding the first translation and ours we can detect only slight differences. As for my translations, I made some minor modifications in some cases. On the basis of the study of the first English translation it is unclear whether it was translated from the Persian original or from the Arabic version. We can see some difference in the first lines, where the unknown first translator used some florid elements which more or less differ from the original Persian version.

Regarding the grammar used by Vámbéry in the Persian letter we can see minor inconsistencies. Based on classical Persian grammar, Vámbéry uses a rich vocabulary to express his admiration for ‘Abdu’l-Baha; however, the usage of verbs and tenses shows some irregularities. For instance, in one case we see that Vámbéry writes the following verbal construction: *‘kašf natawānistam kard’* instead of the well-known *‘natawānistam kašf kunam’* meaning ‘I could not discover’.⁴¹

As for the content of this letter, it can be regarded as a summary of Vámbéry’s former opinions about the Baha’i Faith which he had expressed both in his writings and during his personal meetings with ‘Abdu’l-Baha in Budapest. The following main ideological elements and formerly-known patterns can be detected in his letter:

Admiration for ‘Abdu’l-Baha: Vámbéry repeatedly expresses deep admiration for ‘Abdu’l-Baha using the most eloquent phrases in this letter. The same richly decorated florid linguistic style can be discovered in other formerly seen sources (Zarqani, Rusztem Vámbéry’s foreword). This sometimes exaggerative language known as *ta’ārof*, being not uncommon in Persian, is always thought to be a sign of extreme politeness which is usually used as obligatory necessity between personalities of different ranks not always referring to the original goals of the speakers. However, in the case of Vámbéry we feel that the repeated excessive richly ornamented rhetorical elements used in praising ‘Abdu’l-Baha go far beyond the usage of the *ta’ārof* language and they not only show their speaker’s or writer’s mastery of Persian, but also underline his real admiration for and commitment to the Baha’i cause.

Recalling his personal experiences and impressions: Vámbéry again recounted his lifelong experiences with former religions that he had embraced during his life. Through these negative impressions – he says – he gradually came to the conclusion that none of these religions were capable of solving the social and spiritual needs of the world and his own personal expectations

remained unfulfilled by them. This part of the letter is strikingly similar to his speech addressed to 'Abdu'l-Baha in his home, recorded by Zarqani, in which Vámbéry evoked his journeys both in physical and spiritual terms, which, however, failed to meet his personal and historical expectations. Otherwise Vámbéry's words clearly echo the doctrine of cyclical prophetic manifestations of the Baha'i theology as well as the enumeration of the former Abrahamic religions and their evolvment into a new, universal, monotheistic religion. Therefore, this part of Vámbéry's letter could have been of particular importance to 'Abdu'l-Baha and could have resulted in the eventual decision for its publication.

However, we must note that Vámbéry as a free thinker emphasized the social advantages or disadvantages of religions and did not show interest in Baha'i theology *per se*, as we have seen above in his previous writings and perceptions. That is why he connects the idea of 'failed religion' with the concepts of tyranny and oppression, as opposed to the idea of the 'good religion', that is, the Baha'i Faith, whose teachings promise to solve the above-mentioned social and political chaos. We have seen before that Vámbéry in some of his essays considered the Baha'is a Muslim political reform movement and not an independent new religion; in some points he himself seemed to be hesitating concerning this question. In this letter, however, he made a sharp distinction between Islam and the Baha'i Faith.

Personal sympathy and reference to his former Baha'i contacts: This is perhaps the most fascinating part of this letter. Besides the well-known repeated elements Vámbéry recalls his personal encounters with Baha'u'llah, the father of 'Abdu'l-Baha. This fact is quite surprising, since there is no mention in Vámbéry's former writings about his contacts with Baha'u'llah, to the best of our knowledge. We do not know when, where and how he met Baha'u'llah. However, if we give credence to this piece of information, Vámbéry's personal sympathy towards the Baha'i cause and towards 'Abdu'l-Baha is based not only on his intellectual and social convictions, but could have had personal reasons as well. We must also keep in mind, however, that this is a private letter written exclusively for 'Abdu'l-Baha: this fact helps explain its more emotional character.

Along with the discussed parts of this letter there is one peculiarity that still waits to be proved. Some part of the letter addressed to 'Abdu'l-Baha by Vámbéry clearly repeats his words in the *Struggles of My Life*. In his autobiography published in 1905 Vámbéry expresses the same scepticism about religions, style and content of which is remarkably similar to his letter to 'Abdu'l-Baha: '*During my many years's intercourse with people of various religions, living amongst them in the incognito of Catholic, Protestant, Sunnite, Shiite, and for a short time also a Parsi, I have come to the conclusion religion offers but little security against moral deterioration, and that is not seemly for the spirit of the twentieth century to take example by the customs and doings of savages.*'⁴²

Concerning Vámbéry's encounter's with various religions, his contacts with the Judaism, Christianity and Islam are well-known, but as for his Zoroastrian (Parsi) connections, these remain still a mystery which requires further researches. Vámbéry could see Parsis in London and perhaps he corresponded with some of them, but his adherence to Zoroastrianism is a highly controversial statement.

In his travelogue there are no traces of his personal interest or intention to visit Zoroastrian communities and fire temples, and indeed he never reached the area between Yazd and Kerman where Iranian Zoroastrians traditionally used to live. However, in London there had existed a Parsi community since 1851, which Vámbéry could have visited. But it is highly unlikely that he became a practising Zoroastrian since contemporary documents as well as his personal statement do not mention his presumed Zoroastrian sympathy let alone conversion. Regarding Vámbéry's statement that he had been 'fire worshipper', his remark still remains a mystery, we can hardly guess what was in Vámbéry's mind.

As far as this letter is concerned, we must know, however, that this is a private one addressed only to 'Abdu'l-Baha. However, according to Stannard, the first ever publisher of this letter in English after the unexpected death of Vámbéry, 'Abdu'l-Baha and his close advisers, who had all visited Vámbéry in Budapest a few months earlier, considering the huge importance of this private letter of Vámbéry, decided to publish it. On the other hand, however, the decision to render it into Arabic and English with the possible intention of publishing it was made after receiving Vámbéry's letter sometime in July or August 1913, when Vámbéry still lived and seemed to be in good health – according to Zarqani.

Despite the fact that this letter is one of the last testimonies of Vámbéry, it can hardly be regarded as his last will and testament. Although he struggled with minor diseases and had some health problems at the time of the visit of 'Abdu'l-Baha, he still remained an energetic character until the last day of his life. Even on this last day he was active since he dictated three letters to his secretary. For this reason, Vámbéry did not formulate any arrangement prior to his death. Therefore it would be a serious error to regard this letter as a deliberate step towards eternity. Despite its philosophical attitude and some emotional parts it is a mere summary of Vámbéry's views about the Baha'is. In this short letter he repeated all the ideas regarding the Baha'is he had already written down between 1891 and 1913.

Regarding his relations with the Baha'is there is no doubt that he appreciated their social teachings about religious freedom, equality, tolerance and social justice rather than their theology. We suppose that the main reason why Vámbéry, a highly sceptical character who first ridiculed Baha'is and did not take them really seriously, showed a gradually growing sympathy towards the Baha'is is because of these progressive and modernist ideas which dominated the Baha'i Faith in the eyes of Vámbéry.

However, the sudden demise of Vámbéry and the decision of the Baha'is to publish this letter after his passing away on 15 September 1913 lent an indisputably dramatic character to this document. Following a hard and adventurous life full of backlashes, Vámbéry, who had been directly acquainted with all the monotheistic religions of the Middle East, finally embraced the Baha'i Faith. Personal and political ideas are mixed in the lines of this letter, therefore his conversion to the Baha'i Faith can be perceived both as a very personal step in his case and as a result of his political creed. In this last letter the line between rationalism and emotionalism, between personal and social becomes blurred, the very complex soul of Vámbéry, which had absorbed many differing elements, faiths and ideas throughout his long and arduous life, finally adopted the Baha'i Faith nearly at the moment when the earth accepted his body.

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Figure 1: GA012/058/00001 Front of letter of Vambéry to Abdu'l-Baha. Copyright Baha'i World Centre. Reproduced with permission.

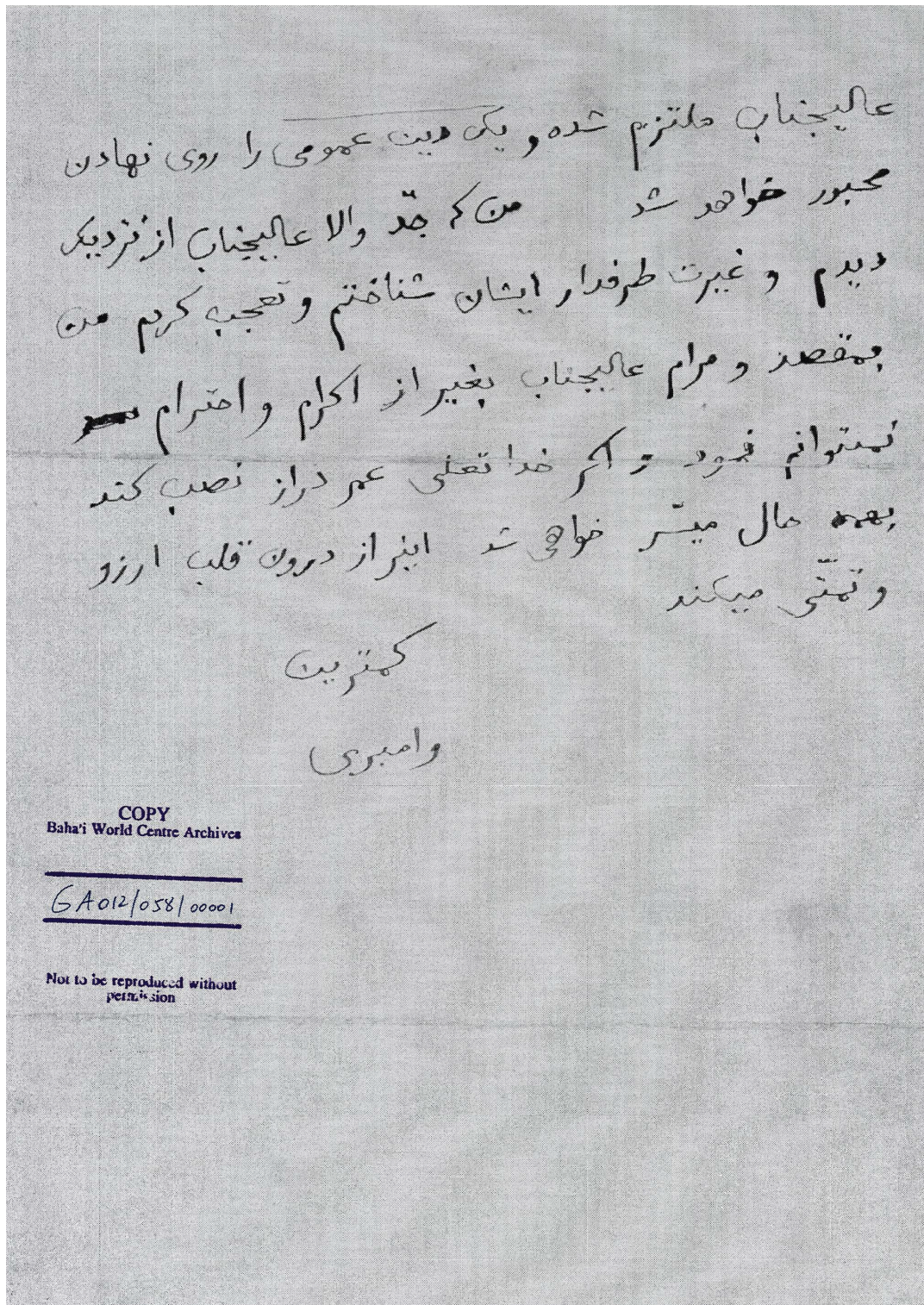


Figure 2: GA012/058/00001 Back of letter of Vambéry to Abdu'l-Baha. Copyright Baha'i World Centre. Reproduced with permission.

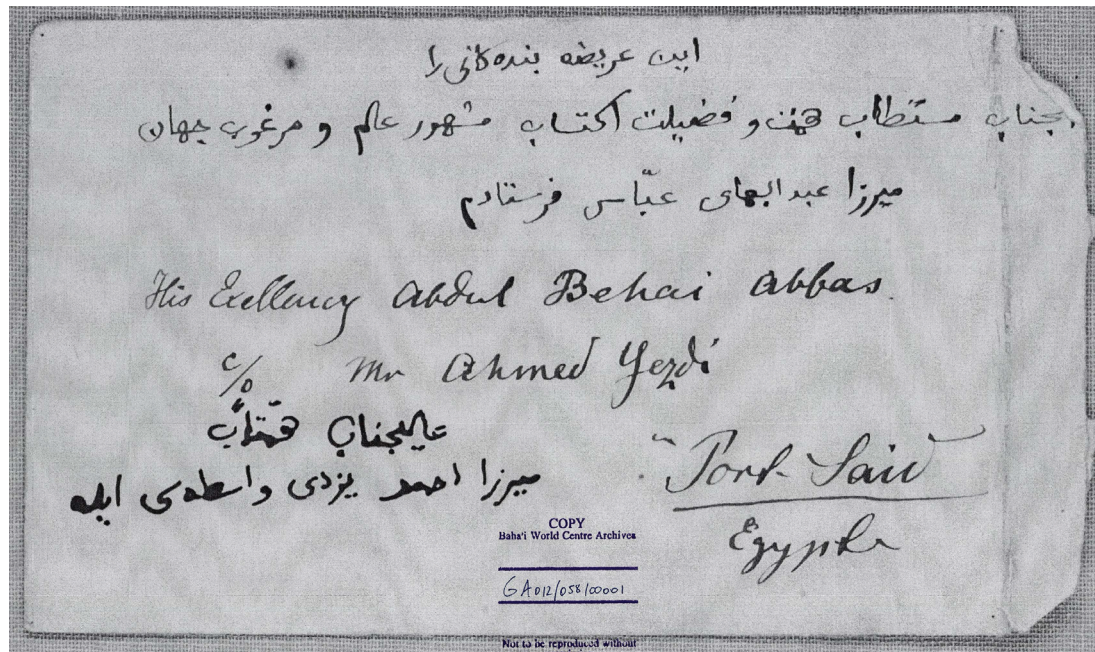


Figure 3: GA012/058/00001 Letter envelope of Vambéry to Abdu'l-Baha. Copyright Baha'i World Centre. Reproduced with permission.

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Contributor details

Miklós Sárközy was born in Hungary in 1976. He studied in Budapest at the Department of Iranian Studies and History. He defended his PhD in 2008. For ten years he taught at different Hungarian universities as professor of Iranian and Middle Eastern Studies. Miklós Sárközy currently is the research fellow of the Institute of Ismaili Studies in London.

Miklós Sárközy has asserted his right under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act, 1988, to be identified as the author of this work in the format that was submitted to Intellect Ltd.

Endnotes

1. Vámbéry altered his name in Istanbul in 1858 when he published his first ever scientific work: Herrman Vambéry, *Deutsch-Türkisches Taschen-Wörterbuch*. Constantinople:Verlag von Gebrüder Koehler, 1858.
2. Dunaszerdahely (Dunájska Streda) was a predominantly Jewish small town until the Holocaust, in many ways showing similarities to the Eastern European Jewish *stetls*.
3. As one of his sub-identities Vámbéry himself proudly used his Muslim name. For instance in a letter written in French addressed to Naser al-Din Shah he signed it in Arabic characters as Reshid Effendi. The letter of Vámbéry to Naser al-Din Shah is preserved in the Oriental Collection of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (MTAKKGY Kégl/074).

4. The atheist tendencies of Vámbéry were also reinforced by a statement of Theodor Herzl: '[Vámbéry] professed five religions, in two of which he has served as a priest. Through these many religious intimacies he has naturally become an atheist ...' Lory Alder and Richard Dalby, *The Dervish of Windsor Castle, The Life of Arminius Vambery*, London: Bachman and Turner, 1979, 373.
5. *ibid.* 373.
6. Alder and Dalby, *The Dervish* 373.
F. Csirkés, 'Adalék Vámbéry Ármionista kapcsolataihoz. Vámbéry és Szüreyja pasa levélváltása' ['Notes on Arminius Vambery's Zionist Contacts. An Exchange of Letters between Süreyya Pasha and Vámbéry'], *Keletkutatás*, 2007.
7. Á. Vámbéry, *Küzdelmeim*, Budapest, 1905.
8. Á. Vámbéry, *A Nyugat (Nyugat) Kultúrája Keleten*, Budapest, 1906.
9. Á. Vámbéry, *A Magyarország bölcsőjénél*, Budapest, 1914.
10. See the foreword of Rusztem Vámbéry to the Hungarian edition of J. E. Esslemont's *Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era*, from 1933. <http://www.erfan.cz/hu/view.php?cisloknihy=2008051801>
11. Miklós Sárközy, 'Nászer al-Dín perzsa sah útinaplója Magyarországról' ['The Diary of Naser al-Din Shah about Hungary'], in M. Dobrovits (szerk.) *A Kelet ritka nyugalma*, VII, Nemzetközi Vámbéry Konferencia, Dunájaska Streda, Slovakia 2010. 113–64.
12. M. Sárközy, 'The East Travels to the West: The Qajar Shahs Touring Europe in the 19th and 20th Century', in B. Kelényi and I. Szántó (eds), *Artisans at the Crossroads: Persian Arts of the Qajar Period (1796–1925)*, Budapest, 2010, 21–5. M. Sárközy, 'Mozaffar al-Dín iráni sah magyarországi utazása és naplója 1900-ban' ['The Journey of Mozaffar al-Din Shah to Hungary and his Diary about Hungary'], in M. Dobrovits M. (szerk.), *A segítő kéznek ez a mesterfogása*, VIII, Nemzetközi Vámbéry Konferencia, Dunájaska Streda, 2011, 397–425.
13. György Léderer, 'Bahá'izmus Budapesten' ['Baha'i Faith in Budapest'] *Keletkutatás*, 1989. autumn, 81–96. Gy. Léderer, 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Budapest', in Peter Smith (ed.), *Bahá'is in the West: Studies in the Bábí and Bahá'í Religions*, vol. 14. Los Angeles: Kalimát Press, 2004, 109–26.
14. For the reports of the Hungarian press about the visit of 'Abdu'l-Baha in 1913 see the website of the Hungarian Baha'i Community: <http://www.bahai.hu/a-bahai-hit/magyarorszagi-tortenet/#toc-az-els-emltsek-s-az-els-hv>
15. Hungarian theosophists and esperantists were relatively active and interested in introducing the Baha'i teachings in Hungary. Leopold Stark himself published an article about the Baha'is in *Teozófia* in the quarterly of the Hungarian theosophists on 25 February 1912. *La Verda Standardo*, the periodical of the Alliance of Hungarian Esperantists translated into Esperanto the speech of 'Abdu'l-Bahá' which he made in Edinburgh in March 1913 a few weeks before his arrival in Budapest. See Léderer, 'Bahá'izmus Budapesten' 82.
16. As far as we know Vámbéry, the head of the Turan Society, did not attend this lecture of 'Abdu'l-Baha due to his illness.
17. Léderer, 'Bahá'izmus Budapesten', 86.
18. All the leading Hungarian orientalists of this period in Hungary, including Vámbéry, Goldziher, Germanus and Kúnos, were of Jewish origin.
19. <http://www.bahai.hu/a-bahai-hit/magyarorszagi-tortenet/#toc-1913-Abdu'l-bah-budapesti-togatsa>, Léderer, 'Bahá'izmus Budapesten' 85.
20. Léderer, 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Budapest' 116.
21. Á. Vámbéry, *Meine Wanderungen und Erlebnisse in Persien*, Pest 1867, 300–1.
22. Vámbéry, *Meine Wanderungen* 302–3.
23. *ibid.* 302.
24. 'Die Perser, dieses allerfeigster Volk Asiens', Vámbéry, 1867, 181.
25. Regarding the content of the German and Hungarian versions of the *Wanderungen* it is important to note that there is one major difference between them. As a prologue, Vámbéry

wrote a historical introduction to the Hungarian one, which he completely omitted from the German. The reasons are unknown: perhaps other German descriptions about Persia had made this chapter unnecessary for the German-speaking public. However, it is important to note also that in this introduction to the Hungarian edition there are very harsh and critical words regarding the Persian identity. A furious Vámbéry regularly lashed out against the presumed insincerity, duplicity and avarice of the Persians. At the end of the second chapter of this introduction, when summarizing the Persian identity and national character, Vámbéry acknowledges that although Persians are gifted with strong imagination and much intellectual talent – much more than any other Muslim nation in Asia – at the same time they are very similar to a clever child who never becomes a real adult, lacking the abilities of perseverance. According to this romantic characterization these presumed 'mental' problems of the Persians largely prevent their westernization. Á. Vámbéry, *Vándorlásaim és élményeim Perzsiában*, Dunaszerdahely (Dunájska Streda), 2005, 23–5.

26. Arminius Vambéry, 'Book Review: A Traveller's Narrative Written to Illustrate the Episode of the Báb', *The Academy*, 1892, III. 12. No. 1036, 245–6.
27. Vambéry, Review Traveller's Narrative 245–6.
28. *Bahá'í News* (West-Englewood) 1935 július, BW VI, 198–202. (Léderer 1989 93. 7. n.) In that year Souqí Effendí Rabbānī disapproved dual membership in other religious communities.
29. Léderer, 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Budapest 116.
30. Á. Vámbéry, *Western Culture in Eastern Lands, A Comparison of Method Adopted by England and Russia in the Middle East*, London, 1906, 334–5.
31. Vámbéry, *Western Culture in Eastern Lands* 337.
32. It must be noted that this part of his book is an edited and abbreviated version of a German essay which Vámbéry had published in the *Deutsche Rundschau* in October 1893 ('Freihetliche Bestrebungen im moslimischen Asien') 68–9.
33. Á. Vámbéry, *A Nyugat kultúrája keleten*, Dunaszerdahely, 2007, 320.
34. Rusztem Vámbéry's foreword to J. E. Esslemont's *Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era*, <http://www.erfan.cz/hu/view.php?cisloknihy=2008051801>.
35. Arminius Vámbéry, Extracts from the Diary of Mirzá Ahmad Sohráb, *Star of the West*, vol. 4, issue 17, 23 September, 1913, http://en.bahaitext.org/Star_of_the_West/Volume_4/Issue_17.
36. Mirzá Maḥmūd Zarqānī, *Kitāb-i badāyi' al-āthār*. 2 vols. Hofheim: Bahá'í Verlag, 139BE/1982 [reprint of Bombay 1914 (vol. 1) and 1921 (vol. 2) editions], 2: 236.
37. L. Alder and R. Dalby, *The Dervish of Windsor Castle: The Life of Arminius Vambéry*, London 1979.
38. Reprinted from *The Egyptian Gazette*, 24 September 1913, http://en.bahaitext.org/Star_of_the_West/Volume_4/Issue_17.
39. Zarqānī, *Kitāb-i badāyi' al-āthār* 238.
40. This is the first English translation published in the *Egyptian Gazette* by J. Stannard on 22 September 1913, *The Egyptian Gazette*, 24 September 1913, http://en.bahaitext.org/Star_of_the_West/Volume_4/Issue_17.

I forward this humble petition to the sanctified and holy presence of Abdul-Baha Abbas who is the centre of knowledge, famous throughout the world and beloved by all mankind. O thou noble friend who art conferring guidance upon humanity, may my life be a ransom to thee!

The loving epistle which you have condescended to write to this servant and the rug which you have forwarded came safely to hand.

The time of the meeting with your excellency and the memory of the benediction of your presence, recurred to the memory of this servant and I am longing for the time when I shall meet you again. Although I have traveled through many countries and cities of Islam, yet have I never met so lofty a character and so exalted a personage as your excellency and I can bear witness that it is not possible to find such another. On this account, I am hoping that the ideals and accomplishments of your excellency may be crowned with success and yield results under all conditions; because behind these ideals and deeds I easily discern the eternal welfare and prosperity of the world of humanity.

This servant, in order to gain first hand information and experience, entered into the ranks of various religions; that is, outwardly I became a Jew, Christian, Mohammedan and Zoroastrian. I discovered that the devotees of these various religions do nothing else but hate and anathematize each other, that all these religions have become the instruments of tyranny and oppression in the hands of rulers and governors and that they are the causes of the destruction of the world of humanity.

Considering these evil results, every person is forced by necessity to enlist himself on the side of your excellency and accept with joy the prospect of a fundamental basis for a universal religion of God being laid through your efforts.

I have seen the father of your excellency from afar. I have realized the self-sacrifice and noble courage of his son and I am lost in admiration.

For the principles and aims of your excellency I express the utmost respect and devotion and if God, the Most High, confers long life, I will be able to serve you under all conditions. I pray and supplicate this from the depths of my heart.

Your servant,

VAMBERY.

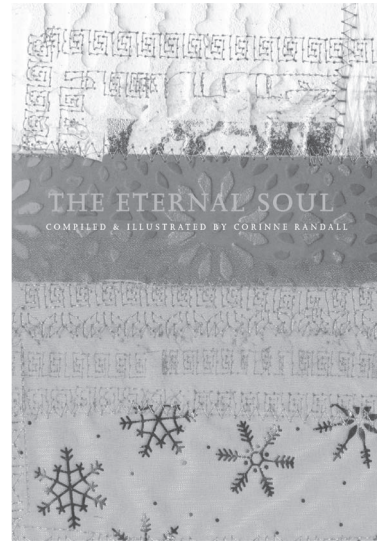
41. See the copy of the original letter at the end of this article.
42. Vámbéry A. *The Story of My Struggles: the Memoirs of Arminius Vámbéry*, London, 1905. Vol.2. 420.

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Being Human: The Shaykhiyya

Todd Lawson *University of Toronto*

'The human form is the greatest proof of God.'

– Ja'far al-Šādiq'

Abstract

The word 'humanism' can and does mean different things in different contexts. Secular humanism or materialistic humanism is often the demon of religious fundamentalists who see it as the opposite of godliness. Such a simple-minded view is challenged by the teachings of the Baha'i Faith, especially those teachings having their roots in the philosophical theology of the Shaykhi school. Here the human being is a locus of unbounded potential and knowledge precisely because of the unutterably lofty station of firstly, the divine manifestations (who for Shaykh Ahmad al-Ahsa'i included the Imams) through whom, secondly, God himself is 'known' or, more precisely, 'indicated'.

Keywords

Humanism
Islam
Qur'an
Shaykh Ahmad
al-Ahsa'i
the Bab
Baha'u'llah

Whatever humanism may be in its ideal definition, it is worth noting that the topic of humanism in the Islamic world is already quite venerable and has been studied from a number of angles.² Surely there is a connection between interest in a distinctive Islamicate humanism and the scriptural sources of the religion. Here it is important and perhaps even timely to observe that amongst the various ways in which the Qur'an distinguishes itself amongst the holy books of the world is the degree to which it is concerned with something it calls humankind or humanity (*al-nās*, 'people'; *al-insān*, 'man, human being, humanity'). From these words, for example, developed the Persian usage: *insāniyat* as denotative of humanity, courtesy, civility, politeness and urbanity – what may be thought indispensable features of any civilized society, whether Eastern or Western. In the Qur'an, the first word occurs 240 times throughout the text, the second 65 times (*Allah* occurs 980 times).

It has been said that the Qur'an and Islam are more concerned with revelation than they are with God, as such. The positive content of the Qur'an seems focused on the prosperity and happiness of human beings, humanity, the human community. The attainment of salvation in Islam is coordinated with the performance of humans in the here and now in their attempts to live a good life in harmony with nature and their species. It is not surprising, given this emphasis, that God in fact seems to disappear altogether in certain discussions and theological formulations. Islam is not the only scriptural monotheism to reflect this development. The same process and phenomenon are observable amongst the exponents of

German mysticism, Eckhart (d. 1328) and Boehme (d. 1624). The latter, for example, is on record as follows:

When I ponder, what God is, I then say: He is One in contrast to the creature, as an eternal Nothing.³

We see an analogous theological ‘erasure’ in Islam, especially in certain philosophies of Shi’ism. The most splendid example may be in the writings of that movement which arose during the first half of the Qajar dynasty following the teachings of Shaykh Ahmad al-Ahsa’i (d. 1826) and dubbed by its critics, the Shaykhiyya, but who recognized itself as the Kashfiyya (the followers of mystical disclosure). We will return to the Shaykhiyya below.

Islam as such is uncompromisingly apophatic: it acknowledges the existence of a God that cannot be described – a God sometimes ‘characterized’ as ‘beyond both being and non-being’. The classical source for Islamic negative theology is Sura 112: The sura of Purity or Transcendence: *He is One, Eternal, He was not begotten nor does He beget. Nothing is in any way comparable to Him.* In Shi’ism, especially but not exclusively, Imami Shi’ism, this supreme absence is countervailed by the incandescent and frequently quasi-divine presence of the Imam.⁴ Particularly, but certainly not exclusively, in the wake of the efflorescence of the cult of the Perfect Man in both Sunni and Shi’i Sufism, this particular apotheosis was tracked and cultivated through what Corbin coined ‘Imamology’. In the most intense iterations of Shi’ism, the Imam is neither a member of the human species nor is the Imam God, but an inter-species of which he is the only example. This is analogous with the role and status of the Qur’an, it represents a class or ‘species’ of book for which it is the only example. The ‘presence’ of the *Deus Absconditus* – the Absent God – may be felt in the following hymnodic expression, penned by Baha’u’llah, writing from within an Iranian religious context, around the middle of the 19th century, after the teachings of Ahmad al-Ahsa’i had permeated much contemporary imamological discourse.

To every discerning and illumined heart it is evident that God, the unknowable Essence, the divine Being, is immensely exalted beyond every human attribute, such as corporeal existence, ascent, descent, egress and regress. Far be it from His glory that human tongue should adequately recount His praise, or that human heart comprehend His fathomless mystery. He is and hath ever been veiled in the ancient eternity of His Essence, and will remain in His Reality everlastingly hidden from the sight of men. ‘*NO VISION TAKETH IN HIM, BUT HE TAKETH IN ALL VISION; HE IS THE SUBTILE, THE ALL-PERCEIVING*’ [Q. 6:103]. No tie of direct intercourse can possibly bind Him to His creatures. He stands exalted beyond and above all separation and union, all proximity and remoteness. No sign can indicate His presence or His absence; inasmuch as by a word of His command all that are in heaven and on earth have come to exist, and by His wish, which is the Primal Will itself, all have stepped out of utter nothingness into the realm of being, the world of the visible.

... How could there be conceived any relationship or possible connection between His Word and they that are created of it? [The holy words:] *God would have you beware of Himself* [Q. 3:28] unmistakably bear witness to the reality of our argument, and the [sacred hadith]: ‘*God was alone; there was none else*

beside Him’ [is] a sure testimony to its truth. All the Prophets of God and their chosen Ones, all the divines, the sages, and the wise of every generation, unanimously recognize their inability to attain unto the comprehension of that Quintessence of all truth, and confess their incapacity to grasp Him, Who is the inmost Reality of all things (*jawhar al-jawāhir*).⁵

Such a severe, uncompromising, stark (yet somehow vibrant and “living”) apophaticism is based on the direct teachings of the Imams, following the Qur’an. Another good example, is this Tradition ascribed to the first Imam, ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib:

‘Alī, in the Sermon of [Divine] Orphanhood (*Khutbat al-Yatīmiyya*: here God is the ‘orphan’), said: ‘If you say: “Of what is He [made]?” He has, as a result, already transcended all created things (*fā-qad tabāyana al-ashyā’ kulla-hā*). And if you say: “He is He,” the “H” and the “E” are His own speech, [and are only in the nature of] an attribute that indicates Him, not an attribute that reveals Him. And if you say: “He has a limit,” the limit is automatically other than He. And if you say: “He is like the air,” the air itself is his creation (*ṣan’*). And the whole discussion goes from attribute to attribute. Blindness of heart is from [faulty] understanding (*fahm*). And [faulty] understanding is the result of [insufficient] awareness (*idrāk*). [Insufficient] awareness is from [lack of] penetrative vision (*istinbāt*), while the kingdom perdures in the kingdom and a created thing terminates in its like. So [from the outset] the quest is destined to end in that which resembles [the seeker, or his faculties]. To barge ahead in such a search ends only in futility. So the meaning is lost. And the struggle is in vain. And communication is cut off. And the path is blocked. And the quest is frustrated. His proofs are His signs, and His existence (*wujūd*) is Its own corroboration (*ithbātu-hu*). Thus it is [only] apparent *wujūd* [which is known] to the contingent world, while that existence of His which is His self [as in the statement] “none but He knows Him, Exalted be He,” – none knows how or what it is except Him.’⁶

Classical Shi‘i sacred lore (i.e. the teachings of the Imams) is replete with such allusions and characterizations that may be understood as casting the earthly, humanoid Imam in the role of pontifex, bridge-builder between mankind/creation and God. However, in the process, it may seem that the Imam becomes the very bridge *and its Destination*.⁷ This is in line with their words: ‘*We are both the treasurers and the treasure*’, the early teaching preserved and venerated by the Shi‘a as the direct teaching of the 12 Imams. However, in order to accomplish this elevation of the spirit and form of the ‘proof of God’ (*hujjatu’llāh*) a certain amount of theoretical scaffolding had to be elaborated. Key here is the subject of humanity itself. Since the Imam assumes the human form, or perhaps more accurately inhabits the human form,⁸ this form had to be seen as worthy of the high calling it was being summoned to host. Perhaps influenced by the veneration and elevation of humanity found mentioned repeatedly in the Qur’an, perhaps influenced by the anthropology of other cultures foreign to the Arabic, Shi‘ism came to concentrate on the beauty and nobility of the human form. Thus:

The human form is the supreme evidence by means of which God testifies to his Creation. It is the Book he has written with his own hand. It is the Temple

he built with his wisdom. It is the meeting place of all the forms of all the worlds. It is the compendium of the disclosed knowledge of the Preserved Tablet (*lawḥ mahfūz*). It is the visible witness, answering for all that is invisible (*ghayb*). It is the guarantee, the proof opposed to all who deny. It is the Straight Way (*al-ṣirāt al-mustaqīm*, Q. 1:6) between paradise and hell.⁹

Naturally, as scripture such statements become the object and subject of a wide variety of commentary and interpretation. Much of this interpretation is directed towards the nature and role of the Imam himself, as if Shi'ism wishes to understand the nature of humanity by seeing the Imam as a touchstone. Again, however, attitudes vary. According to some views, the Imam is the embodiment of the station and vocation designated as the Perfect Man (*al-insān al-kāmil*). This seems to be the clear position of Muḥsin Fayḍ Kāshānī (d. 1680), his immediate intellectual forebears and successors. One implication of this view is that all humans are, ipso facto, less than perfect but may aspire to perfection by emulating and obeying the Imam. The idea of the Perfect Man would thus be understood as one who has complete spiritual or gnostic understanding, as is indicated in the title of the influential classic book on the topic by the later follower of Ibn 'Arabi, 'Abd al-Karīm al-Jīlī (d. 1424): *The Man with Complete Understanding of First Things and Last Things*.¹⁰ Thus knowledge is key. Another view, represented by the teachings of Shaykh Ahmad al-Aḥsā'i and his following is that the Imam may 'occupy' a human form, but cannot be considered human therefore. Rather for the Shaykhiyya, the Perfect Man is the one who recognizes the Imam. As such, the classic example of the Perfect Man is Salmān the Persian, not the Imam. It seems that this doctrine is a direct result and pillar of the unrelenting negative theology – apophaticism – taught by Shaykh Ahmad al-Aḥsā'i.

The Shaykhiyya

The intense apophaticism of this school renders the vocable 'God' nearly empty of content, while the anthropology is simultaneously elevated to the theomorphic: man is now in the shape of the divine manifestation. The result is both a divinized humanism and a humanized theology: all knowledge is conditioned by and for the human 'form' and its faculties. Such an apperception is not new, especially in Islamic intellectual culture. Shaykh Ahmad al-Aḥsā'i has been referred to in a recent substantial study as the greatest Muslim philosopher after Mullā Ṣadrā (d. 1640).¹¹ Indeed, Shaykh Ahmad commented on and criticized the dense and difficult philosophical writings of the latter and his intellectual and spiritual progeny. The apple of discord may be described precisely with reference to theology. For Shaykh Ahmad, the earlier Shi'i philosophers had erred grievously in the way in which they wrote and thought about God. His views may be summarized from a commentary on a celebrated hadith found in his *Commentary on the Most Great Tablet of Visitation (Shahr ziyārat al-jāmi'a al-kubrā)*, which serves to affirm the absolute transcendence (*tanzīh*) of God and also points to the fundamental mystery of being, which, according to Henry Corbin, goes beyond the ontological theories of the highly influential *Ishrāqī* tradition.¹²

Shaykhi ontology provides for the metaphysical pre-existence of the Imams. Here, as in Isma'ili metaphysics, God is quite outside and beyond

whatever may be considered under the category of Being (*wujūd*). “Zayd” stands by virtue of the appearance in him of the ‘quality’ of standing. But this quality appears in Zayd only as a result of the divine command, which brings together the two aspects (i.e. Zayd and standing) of the ‘being event’ known together as ‘stander’ (*qā'im*). Without this command the two would remain separate, and both elements would remain unknown. This command (*amr*) comprises two aspects. One is completely transcendent (i.e. the active command, *amr fi'li*), which proceeds from the unknowable God. The other aspect is a passive one (i.e. the passive command, *amr maf'ūlī*), which is this same imperative as activated in the first creatures (i.e. the Imams), and appears in the world through the bearer of the divine quality, analogous to Zayd as “stander” (*qā'im*). The *amr maf'ūlī* is also designated by the Shaykhis as the *Nūr al-anwār*, the *Ḥaqīqat muḥ ammadiyya*, or the ‘pleroma’ of the 12 Imams. The *amr maf'ūlī*, as issuing from the *amr fi'li* or the unknowable divine Essence, is therefore a ‘secret veiled in a secret’. The difference between the Shaykhis and, for example the *Ishraqīs*, is that the latter identify the *Nūr al-anwār* directly with God.¹³ The Shaykhi theory would appear to accomplish two distinct but related tasks: the first is an obvious exaltation of the station of the Imams to the degree of bringing down upon their teaching the condemnatory accusation of ‘extremism’ (*ghuluww*);¹⁴ the second is a virtual removal from the human mind of any positive content for the word ‘God’. It is difficult to determine which of the two results, if either, is pre-eminent. This first level of discourse has as its aim the establishment of God’s utter transcendence, which as has been seen, can only be spoken of by reference to Being (but for that, this transcendence is not diminished). The Imams, as representatives of this transcendence, are the focus for the believer, but the believer must never lose sight of the unseeable “point” beyond the Imams. This is why, says Shaykh Ahmad, it is towards the inaccessible divine Essence man is constantly turning even though he will never be able to actually find It. Nonetheless, he continues to search for It even though It remains forever inaccessible to him.¹⁵

The primordial existence that is brought into being by the divine passive command (i.e. the *amr maf'ūlī*) is the primordial Light of Lights, also referred to as the Light of Fourteen Flames, the ontic reality of the 14 members of the People of the House (*ahl al-bayt*) who are recognized as bearers and indeed embodiments of divine authority and guardianship (*walāya*): the Prophet Muhammad, his daughter Fatima and the 12 Imams, beginning with ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭalīb (d. 661) and ending with the hidden Imam Mahdi, Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-‘Askarī (disappeared 874). This ‘pleroma’ forms one sole primordial essence as the same Light from which proceeds the light of the angelic Intellects or the ‘Angels of the Veil’, and the light from which the prophets were created. The light which constitutes the being of the prophets is that from which the faithful believers have also been created.¹⁶ Corbin’s translation of an important passage by Shaykh Ahmad summarizes this idea:

Aucune réalité n'est créée d'une essence qui lui soit inférieure. Toute réalité inférieure est créée de l'irradiation d'une réalité qui lui est supérieure. Une réalité supérieure, c'est par exemple, le soleil lui-même; la réalité inférieure,

c'est son irradiation illuminant la surface de la Terre. Chaque réalité existe en son sens vrai (*ḥaqīqat*) au rang qui lui est propre, est par rapport à ce qui est au-dessous d'elle; elle est symbole et figure (*majāz*), effet opéré, par rapport à ce qui est au-dessus d'elle.¹⁷

No reality is created from the irradiation of an essence that is inferior to it. Each inferior reality is created from another reality that is superior to it. A superior reality is, for example, the sun itself; an inferior reality, is its light shed on the surface of the Earth. Each reality exists in its own true sense (*ḥaqīqat*) at a level that is proper to it and in relation to that which is below it. It is therefore in actuality a symbol and a figure (*majāz*), of that which is above it.

The doctrine of the Perfect Shi'i was inseparable from Shaykhi apophatic theology and implied a virtual deification of the 14 Pure Ones of orthodoxy: Muhammad, Fatima, 'Ali, Hasan, Husayn and the remaining Imams of Twelver Shi'ism. This statement must be tempered by reference to the innumerable assertions of the servitude of Muhammad and the Imams to the essence of God. It would be misleading in the extreme to suggest that this 'Imam-apotheosis' represents incarnationism. God here is eternally unknowable (rather than remote) and makes His will known through various stages. Eternally crucial to this process is the twofold institution of Prophethood/Imamate, and whenever any positive statement about divinity is made, its proper reference is to this institution which goes by the technical name Guardianship (*walāya*). The Prophet and Imams are a different order of creation as mediators between God and Man. They are separated from the divine essence by a line of apparently infinite tensile strength and flexibility. In Corbin's terms they represent the *Deus Revelatus*: the Revealed God, as complementary to and distinct from the *Deus Absconditus*, which is referred to as the 'unknowable essence' and by other terms, and for which a convenient but not utterly coterminous word in Arabic is *allāh*.¹⁸

The Perfect Shi'i acts as mediator between the Imams (represented by the 12th, Muhammad ibn al-Hasan) and Man. Therefore when the Bab claimed to have received the *Tafsīr sūrat Yūsuf* from the Imam, and even though he did not explicitly claim for himself the title of Perfect Shi'i, those Shaykhis – or better Kashfīs – were his first readers were already convinced of the necessity for such a link as *bāb* ('gate'), even if they were not agreed as to who was best qualified to act as such, or less important what the exact name for such a link should be. E. G. Browne states the importance of the doctrine of the Perfect Shi'i for the success of Babism in its early stages:

He [the Bab] did not invent this term [*bāb*], nor was he even the first to revive it, for it was used in the same sense by ash-Shalmaghānī, a Messiah of the 10th cent. of our era, and by others. So far as recent times are concerned, however, it was the Shaykhī school ... which revived the idea that among the faithful followers of the Twelfth Imam there must always exist one, whom they entitled *Shī'a-i-Kāmil* [*sic*] ... 'the Perfect Shī'ite', who was in direct spiritual communication with him. Neither Shaykh Ahmad nor his successor Sayyid Kāzīm ... made use of the title 'Bāb', but their conception of 'the Perfect Shī'ite' was practically identical with the idea connoted by that title. On the death of Sayyid Kāzīm his followers were naturally impelled by their doctrine concerning 'the Perfect Shī'ite' to seek his successor.¹⁹

What Browne does not emphasize here is that it is important to appreciate one of the more significant results of Shaykhi theology in order to understand the eventual claim made by the Bab. The pleroma of the Prophet, Fatima and the Imams, had in one sense replaced God (*Deus Absconditus*) for Shaykh Ahmad. As a result, the hierarchy of God, Prophet, Imam, Bab, Shi'i was sounded in a higher register or 'octave', each element being 'promoted' as it were, to fill the gap produced by the distinctively relentless Shaykhi view of divine transcendence (*tanzih*). As a result, a claim to be the *bāb* of the Imam, may be seen as functionally identical to a claim to *imāma* as usually understood.

The study of the Shaykhiyya seems to be pursued by two distinct types of humanist. In the first place there are those who wish to see in the Shaykhi vaunting or deifying of the Imam a concomitant vaunting and elevation of the human being as such. While the Imam is beyond species as such (cf. Boehme's assertion that Adam was neither male nor female) and therefore unqualifiable in every way by the designation 'Perfect Man', there is an unmistakable concomitant elevation of the 'human' whose vocation is seeker and pursuer of that which is higher, even if that which is higher is relatively (and therefore paradoxically) non-existent (cf. Boehme's statement quoted at the beginning). In this instance it is Salman the Persian (*Salman Farisi*) who is the Perfect Man, perfection being expressed in the act of correctly recognizing that which was superior to himself, namely his discovery/recognition of the Prophet Muhammad. The main problem facing the strictly humanist reading (in what might be considered a Western or European sense) of the Shaykhiyya is bound up with an attendant hierarchical vision of the cosmos. One of the achievements of European humanism was the eventual disestablishment of the medieval metaphysical hierarchy sometimes referred to as the Great Chain of Being. This hierarchy served a number of sacerdotal and epistemic purposes, from providing a logical and structural basis for the authority of the Church, to an understanding of the way in which the universe came to be. Thus Copernicus's theorizing of the heliocentric model (and most importantly, the abandonment of the geocentric model) augurs eloquently for the eventual tenor and form of European/Western humanism which will come to be emblemized in the centreless universe of the post-Einstein age. Islamicate humanism has a much different cultural context and genesis, largely because in Islamic culture there was never a serious divide between what we now call faith and reason, science and religion. For example, the Qur'an itself is full of many observations on how God causes the natural world to develop. Rather than having been taken as proof that there is no need of God (cf. 19th-century scientism) these processes and developments are generally taken as signs of God's overwhelming 'miraculous' power, signs that should be studied as deeply as possible. How else could such polymaths as Avicenna, al-Biruni, al-Ghazzali and thousands of other less well-known daughters and sons of Islamic culture practice their various 'natural sciences' and not been challenged as far as their faith was concerned? On the contrary, they emerge as heroes of Islamic faith, rather than the opposite.²⁰

The distinguishing features of the Shaykhi school, as is the case with most Muslim religious groups, are related to the manner in which spiritual authority is to be defined and mediated. The active controversy carried

on by the partisans of the Usulis and the Akhbaris is a case in point. The debate was based on the question of whether *ijtihād*, 'exerting individual effort to form an opinion', rather than wholesale acceptance of the guidance contained in the preserved statements of the Prophet and the Imams (pl. *akhbār*), was the best way to resolve the questions of religion, which would of course include questions of law. Finally, the Usulis, those in favour of *ijtihād*, won the day and for the past two hundred years this basic attitude toward the written sources of the Islamic religion has held sway over most of the Shi'i world.²¹ Shaykh Ahmad had grown up in one of the few bastions of Akhbari Shi'ism, and his synthesis may be seen, in part, as an elaboration of this method. Through propounding a doctrine of the *Nāṭiq Wāḥid* (a single authoritative voice) and the Perfect Shi'i, perhaps an echo of the Sufi idea of the Perfect Man (*al-insān al-kāmil*), Shaykh Ahmad was able, at least in theory, to circumvent the restrictions imposed by other methods and approaches and arrive at what he considered a much less fettered and more independent position vis-à-vis the reinterpretation of the raw material of the Islamic religion – the Qur'an and Sunna of the Prophet and the teachings of the Imams which were preserved in the Traditions (*akhbār*). It may be that Shaykh Ahmad's early exposure to the ideas of the Dhahabi Sufi order is in part responsible for his elaboration of the idea of the Perfect Shi'i.²²

Much work remains to be done on the Sufism of Shaykh Ahmad. But, an example of such intellectual freedom is exemplified in Shaykh Ahmad's response to those who charged him with relying upon strange and unsound hadiths to support of his ideas. Shaykh Ahmad serenely responded that he could distinguish a sound hadith from a weak one through its 'fragrance'.²³ Such a response is, in fact, an adamant critique of *taqlīd* which here is not merely 'imitation' but 'blind imitation' in matters religious. So vehement was his repudiation of *taqlīd* that some have seen him as a precociously modern (not to say post-modern) democrat and proponent of secular humanism. But there are alternative characterizations:

Generally speaking, Shaikhism contains a stronger Shi'ite theological 'impetus' and is more purely 'religious' than philosophers such as Mullā Ṣadrā were. Iqbāl's statement ... that shaikh Ahmad was an enthusiastic reader of Mullā Ṣadrā's works is based on a misunderstanding: the Shaikhīs studied Mullā Ṣadrā but did not always approve of what he said; in fact, on some points (for example, questions concerning the knowledge of God) they returned to less philosophical and more religious positions ... [341] If the complex theological position of the Shaikhīs could be summed up in a few words I would say that it is based on two points, one deeply religious and the other with rational tendencies ... [and] [342] to symbolic explanations (which sometimes go beyond the realistic symbolism of Ṣadrā) to enter into a truly rationalist allegory of the miraculous aspect of traditional theological legends. ... [343] Everything is easily resolved by transposing the historical reality of the facts of revelation onto metahistorical planes (*Muḥammad*, 'Alī, etc. = First Creature): it is here, and not in a humanistic rationalism, that the secret of Shaikhī symbolism lies.²⁴

So, how to understand the rejection of *taqlīd* in the 'key' of Shaykhism and what are the implications for such an Islamic humanism? It seems,

on the one hand, that the only truly or perfectly 'human' is the Imam. All others fall short, somehow. As a paradox, such a teaching lends itself well to the mystical and literary tastes of the time and place. Even if Shaykh Ahmad posits something called a Perfect Shi'i, this perfection is clearly predicated upon that Shi'i's ability to recognize the superhuman Imam. But the nature of knowledge and perception, according to not only the masters of the Shaykhi school, but a general Islamicate epistemological premise, is that one perceives and knows only according to what one is, or what is already inside one. For Salman to recognize Muhammad there must have been something of Muhammad already alive inside of him. This principle is found fully endorsed in the Bab's oldest extant work, the *Risālat al-sulūk*, mentioned above (note 18). It is the intellect of the Imam, not of the average believer, which serves as a locus for the manifestation of God. In his advice to a student, Shaykh Ahmad says:

[Y]ou should take [current] philosophical theology (*Ḥikmat*) and align it with the *Ḥikmat* of the *People of 'Iṣma*, [namely, the Imams], upon them be peace. Then, the meaning will be sound. If you would make Their words your guide, and become a divinely instructed follower, do not disregard Their teaching by turning to the words of the Philosophers (*ḥukamā'*) and the Theologians (*mutakallimūn*) and the Sufis (*ahl al-taṣawwuf*). Do only what They desire, upon them be peace. It is not as the Sufis and Philosophers say, contrary to what [Fayḍ Kāshānī] would have us believe in his books.²⁵

The exhortation to his questioner is most interesting. Among other things, he tells him that the Sufis, the *Ḥukama* and the Theologians are not proofs (*ḥujjāt*, like the Imams), that they are not his Imams, and that he must imitate the Imams directly.²⁶ Not, however, the way some do through ignorance and error. Rather, his questioner should practise such emulation (*taqlīd*) of the Imams with reason, so that he does not blindly follow. If the questioner protests that their words do not conform to reason, Shaykh Ahmad responds:

I say to you, their words are a divine binding reality (*ḥaqq*), and your reason is a divine binding reality (as long as you do not corrupt it with mirky knowledge) and the correcting principles are a divine binding reality because they are all of 'THE DIVINE NATURE UPON WHICH HE FASHIONED MANKIND (*fiṭrat allāh al-latī faṭara al-nās 'alayhā*)' (Q. 30:30). So, I do not want you to practice 'pure *taqlīd*' as some vainly imagine it should be practiced. Rather, read Their words as rational indications [of thought and action] through your own powers of understanding, completely detached from the understanding of others. If you understand my words, and act according to my directions you will find that what I tell you is a useful tool for solving abstruse problems. By God, this is my teaching and that which should represent me (literally, 'be my successor – caliph') after I am gone.²⁷

Shaykh Ahmad, as we know, was not the only one preoccupied with the identity of the true believer in divine unity (*al-muwahhid*) during the late 18th and 19th centuries. The Wahhabi threat to Sufism and extremist/*ghuluww*

Shi'ism and philosophy of all kinds was not only a theological issue, but also a matter of life and death in some regions. The ironic development is, however, that in the process of Shaykh Ahmad's argument the Imams become God revealed, taking His place. The real but starkly apophatic God is removed further from contemplation than one might have thought possible, (unless of course one happens to be a classical Isma'ili philosopher).

One of the results of this elevation of the Imams, an elevation that automatically raises Divinity immeasurably higher, is that the answer to the question, 'What does it mean to be human?' becomes in some ways more interesting than it was before. The Imams, according to Shaykh Ahmad Ahsa'i – and Isma'ili thought – are neither human nor divine, but a different order of being, a separate and distinct species. The Perfect Man, in Shaykhi thought is not the Prophet, contrary to a traditional Sufi teaching rooted in the teachings of Ibn 'Arabi,²⁸ nor is the idea of the Perfect Man represented by the Prophet and the Imams, contrary to the common Twelver Shi'i adaption of this doctrine.

Rather, for Shaykh Ahmad, the Perfect Man is the one who recognizes the spiritual and ontological dignity of these figures. It is Salman – not Muhammad – who represents the prototype here.²⁹ Shaykh Ahmad was held in high esteem by the clerical and the political communities of Iran: Fath 'Alī Shāh tried unsuccessfully to persuade him to live in Tehran nearer the court. And, the story is told of how the governor of Kermanshah felt so honoured by Shaykh Ahmad's decision to visit his city that he travelled several miles out from Kermanshah for the sole purpose of greeting the famous scholar and escorting him into town. It may be that Shaykh Ahmad was so warmly welcomed by the political and religious leaders of Iran because his views offered a rationally sustainable mystical interpretation of standard twelver Shi'ism which served as a powerful alternative to what was becoming a disturbing interest in more purely Sufi doctrine, as propagated by the leaders of, for example, the Ni'matullahi order who in turn had very cordial relations with the Imams of the Qāsimī-Shāhī Nizārī Isma'ili community.³⁰ Shaykh Ahmad, as an accomplished and renowned Twelver *mujtahid* would have served as an 'orthodox' guarantor for the type of profoundly mystical religion so at home and traditionally celebrated in Iran, where mysticism is as much an expression of the human as it is of the divine.

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Contributor details

Todd Lawson is emeritus professor of Islamic Thought at the university of Toronto and has published on the Qur'an commentary of the Bab and other works of scriptural exegesis. He has been a Baha'i since 1968.

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Endnotes

1. Mullā Muḥammad Muḥsin Fayḍ Kāshānī (d. 1680), *Kalimāt-i Maknūna min 'ulūm ahl al-ḥikma wa'l-ma'rifa*, Tehran, 1963, 125: *al-sūrat al-insāniya akbar ḥujjat Allāh 'alā khalqihī*: 'The human form is the greatest proof of God to His creation'.
2. The first example which comes to mind is Mohammed Arkoun, *Contribution à l'étude de l'humanisme arabe au IVe/Xe siècle: Miskawayh (320/325–421)=(932/936–1030), philosophe et historien*, Paris: Vrin, 1970.
3. 'Wenn ich betrachte, was Gott ist, so sage ich: Er ist das Eine gegen der Kreatur, als ein ewig Nichts; er hat weder Grund, Anfang noch Staette; und besitzt nicht, als nur sich selber: er ist der Wille des Ungrundes, er ist in sich selber nur Eines: er bedarf keinen Raum noch Ort: er gebaeret von Ewigkeit in Ewigkeit sich selber in sich: er ist keinem Dinge gleich oder aehnlich, und hat keinen sonderlichen Ort, da er wohne: die ewige Weisheit oder Verstand ist seine Wohne: er ist der Wille der Weisheit, die Weisheit ist seine Offenbarung.' (Jakob Böhme's *Sämmtliche Werke*, 7 vols., herausgegeben von K. W. Schiebler, Leipzig, 1832–60, bd. 5: *Mysterium Magnum*, p. 7, translation is that found in N. A. Berdayev (Berdiaev), 'Studies Concerning Jacob Boehme Etude I, The Teaching about the Ungrund and Freedom' a translation by Fr. S. Janos (2002) of the original Russian article 'IZ ETIUDOV O YA. BEME. ETIUD I. UCHENIE OB UNGRUND'E I SVOBODE', *Journal Put'*, No. 20 (Feb. 1930): 47–79, accessed 25 July 2009 at: http://www.berdayev.com/berdiaev/berd_lib/1930_349.html#1-- .
4. On this phenomenon, see M. A. Amir-Moezzi, 'Une absence remplie de présences. Herméneutiques de l'occultation chez les Shaykhiyya (Aspects de l'imamologie duodécimaine VII)', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 64(1), 2001, 1–18. See also the same author's 'Only the man of God is human: theology and mystical anthropology according to early Imami exegesis (aspects of Twelver Imamology IV)' in *Shi'ism*, ed. E. Kohlberg, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003.
5. Bahá'u'lláh, *Kitāb-i mustatāb-i ṭqān*. Cairo, 1934, pp. 73–4, the English is from Shoghi Effendi Rabbani (trans.), *The Kitāb-i-ṭqān: The Book of Certitude Revealed by Bahá'u'lláh*, Wilmette, IL, 1970, pp. 98–9.
6. As found in a ms. copy of a work by Sayyid 'Ali Muḥammad Shīrāzī, 'Tafsīr sūrat al-baqara', Browne Collection, F10, Cambridge University Library, f.92r. I have been unable to find this *khuṭba* elsewhere. The literature of Imamology, however, is full of such pronouncements underlining the absolute unknowableness of God.
7. See the valuable discussion of this in M. A. Amir-Moezzi, *Le guide divin dans le shīisme originel: aux sources de l'ésotérisme en Islam*, Paris, 1992.
8. 'We are the mysteries of God which have been deposited in human bodies'/'*naḥnu asrār Allāh al-mūda'a fī ḥayākil al-bashariyya*', Kāshānī, *Kalimat-i Maknuna*, 124.
9. Kāshānī, 125, on the authority of the sixth Imam, Ja'far al-ṣādiq (d. 765). The opening words are: *al-ṣūrat al-insāniya akbar ḥujjat Allāh 'alā khalqihī wa ḥiya kitāb al-ladhī katabahu bi-yadihi wa ḥiya ḥaykal al-ladhī banā;ahu bi-ḥikmatihī wa ḥiya majma'a suwwar al-'ālamīn*. 'The human form is the greatest proof of God to his creation for it is the book which he wrote with his own two hands and it is the temple that he raised through his wisdom as it is the meeting place of all the forms of all the worlds of God'. My translation.
10. *Al-Insān al-kāmil fī ma'rifat al-awākhir wa al-awā'il*. Cairo, 1949.
11. James W Morris, *The Wisdom of the Throne – An Introduction to the Philosophy of Mulla Sadra*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980.
12. Henry Corbin, *En Islam iranien*, 4 volumes, Paris: Gallimard, 1971–2, vol. 1, 192.
13. See also Landolt, 'The Mystical and Visionary Treatises of Suhrawardī', *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 107(3), 1987.
14. Vahid Rafati, 'The Development of Shaykhī Thought in Shī'i Islam', unpublished PhD dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 1979, 194–6.
15. Corbin, 1:194.
16. Cf. the frequently quoted statement: 'The believers are the rays of the prophets'.
17. Corbin, 1:205. This passage is from Shaykh Ahmad's *Sharḥ al-mashā'ir*.

18. Corbin, 1:300–1.
19. E. G. Browne, 'Bâb, Bâbîs', *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, vol. 2, Edinburgh, 1909, 300. It is important to note the [sic] here. If translated literally, it would mean the Perfect Community of Believers (*Shī'a*), and this may indeed turn out to be the correct teaching of the Shaykhis. See Todd Lawson, 'The Bâb's Epistle on the Spiritual Journey to God', *The Bahá'í Faith and the World Religions*, ed. M. Momen, Oxford: George Ronald, 2003, 231–47.
20. This is not to ignore the countless doctrinal battles amongst Muslims that raged around and because of such an energetic and productive life of the mind and of course the famous 'destruction of philosophy' at the pen of this same Ghazali. But such philosophy only 'died' in the Islamic West. It remained very much alive in Iran and Irano Islamicate regions such as the Ottoman and Mughal Empires and their historical issue.
21. On this subject see now Robert Gleave, *Scripturalist Islam: The History and Doctrines of the Akhbārī Shī'ī School*, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2007.
22. As suggested in Rafati, 'The Development of Shaykhī Thought'.
23. Corbin, 4:259.
24. Alessandro Bausani, *Religion in Iran: From Zoroaster to Baha'u'llah*, translated by J. M. Marchesi, New York: Bibliotheca Persica Press, 2003, 340–4.
25. Aḥmad al-Aḥsa'i *Risāla* 174.
26. Aḥmad al-Aḥsa'i *Risāla* 151–2.
27. Aḥmad al-Aḥsa'i *Risāla* 152. For a rich discussion of 'reason as sovereign' and 'reason as vicegerent' in Islamic culture, see John Walbridge, *God and Logic in Islam: The Caliphate of Reason*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
28. For example, Roger Arnaldez, '*al-Insān al-Kāmil*', *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition. Edited by: P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs. Brill Online, 2014.
29. Cf. M. A. Amir-Moezzi, 'Aspects de l'Imamologie Duodécimaine I: Rémarques sur la Divinité de l'Imām', *Studia Iranica* 25 (1996) 193–216.
30. See Farhad Daftary, *The Ismā'īlīs: Their History and Doctrines* (Cambridge, 1990) 502–7 and references for a discussion of the dynamics of this relationship and insights into the religious views of Faṭḥ 'Alī Shāh himself. See Aḥmad al-Aḥsā'ī, *Risāla fī kayfiyya al-sulūk ilā Allāh* (Beirut: 1414/1993) for distinctive interpretations of standard Sufi practices and topics such as *dhikr*, *ṣuḥba*, etc.

Baha'i Mage: The Extraordinary Life and Work of Robert Felkin

Lil Osborn

Abstract

In investigating the relationship between the Baha'is and the Western Esoteric Tradition several individuals emerge as important in both circles; however, none are as prominent in as many fields as Robert Felkin. Felkin was notable as a physician, a missionary, an Anglican, a magician and a Baha'i. The purpose of this paper is to examine his life and work in the context of his search for Ascended Masters and the multiplicity of identities and roles he assumed.

Keywords

Robert Felkin
Stella Matutina
Western Esoteric Tradition
occult
religious identity

Introduction

The junction of all times, people and places are unique, but Edwardian England was a time and place where technology, education, politics and religion combined to create people who were literate, had access to information, could travel and had time enough to indulge their passions as never before. In the early years of the 20th century, if you were young, British and rich, the world, or at least the large part of it contained within the British Empire was yours to explore and exploit or to serve and administer.

There had been significant challenges to the traditional Christian beliefs; Charles Darwin had published his *Origin of the Species* in 1859, causing an intellectual revolution that would filter down into the wider population. George MacDonald's *The Golden Bough* (1890) attempted to rationalize the relationship between religion and magic, using the evolutionary ideas of Darwin to argue that magic had evolved into religion, which would in turn be replaced by science. The Empire had brought India closer and with it Theosophy and Liberal Christianity, which attempted to syncretize eastern and western belief systems. The emergence of archaeology as a serious academic discipline had allowed the public to view the treasures of past societies in the cathedral-like museums which were the centre piece of every large town, whilst folklorists attempted to catalogue the survival of more localized ancient communities.

Perhaps one of the most interesting developments in spiritual life at the turn of the 19th century was the resurgence of occultism and the consequent growth in membership of occult and esoteric orders amongst the educated classes. The most important of the occult orders was the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn which was founded in 1888 by William Robert Woodman, William Wynn Westcott and Samuel Liddell MacGregor Mathers: all three were Freemasons and members of Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia (SRIA) a Masonic esoteric Christian order formed by Robert Wentworth Little in 1865.¹ The Golden Dawn was a magical order,

the purpose of which was spiritual development. Membership was open to both men and women and the system of spiritual development was based on hierarchy and initiation similar to that of Masonic Lodges. There were three orders within the Golden Dawn; the First Order taught esoteric philosophy based on the Hermetic Qabalah and personal development through study and awareness of the four classical elements as well as the basics of astrology, tarot divination, and geomancy. The Second or 'Inner' Order, the *Rosae Rubrae et Aureae Crucis* (the Ruby Rose and Cross of Gold), taught proper magic, including scrying, astral travel and alchemy. The Third Order was that of the 'Secret Chiefs', who were said to be highly spiritually developed beings; they supposedly directed the activities of the lower two orders by spirit communication with the Chiefs of the Second Order.

The Secret Chiefs was the name given to these highly developed beings in the Golden Dawn system; they were believed to be the source of the esoteric knowledge entrusted to the Order. They are similar in concept to the Bodhisattva in Buddhism, enlightened beings who seek to enlighten others. The earliest western source on their activities is entities is Karl von Eckartshausen, whose *The Cloud Upon The Sanctuary*, published in 1802, explained in some detail their character and motivations. Their names and descriptions have varied through time, being dependent upon those who reflected their experience of contact with them. Several 19th- and 20th-century occultists claimed to belong to or to have contacted these Secret Chiefs and made these communications known to others. It was important for esoteric orders to have access to such beings in order to claim their teachings were authentic pathways to spiritual development. The nature of the Secret Chiefs would bedevil the Golden Dawn and ultimately rip it apart. Felkin would spend his life seeking to meet them in flesh and blood, whilst others would defend their elusiveness by arguing they were not of this world and communicated only in the spirit form.

Felkin

Robert William Felkin (13 March 1853–28 December 1926) was born in Beeston, Nottinghamshire, the son of Robert Felkin (1828–99), a Nonconformist lace manufacturer. His grandfather, William Felkin (1795–1874), was the son of a Baptist minister who remains one of the best-known names in the Victorian lace industry. He was mayor of Nottingham in 1851, when he exhibited at the Great Exhibition. In 1864, Felkin's lace business failed and he retired to write about the lace and hosiery trades.² His son and partner Robert Felkin moved to Wolverhampton to take up a position as manager of the home department of Mander Brothers, varnish manufacturers. His son, also called Robert, was educated at Wolverhampton Grammar School, where he met the explorer David Livingstone, who inspired him to become a medical missionary.² The young Robert spent some time in Chemnitz in Germany with an uncle and learned German, and Germany was in some ways to be an abiding motif in his spiritual life, the home of Christian Rosenkreuz, the possibly allegorical founder of the Rosicrucian Order, of Karl von Eckartshausen and Anna Sprengel, the name of the alleged source of the Golden Dawn system.

In 1875 Felkin became a medical student at Edinburgh University, although the Golden Dawn had a very eclectic membership base, the

medical profession was well represented and this may be a reflection of the Rosicrucian linking of healing with spiritual development. After a meeting in 1877 with Alexander Murdoch Mackay (1849–90), a Scottish missionary, Felkin interrupted his medical studies and in 1878 joined a Church Mission Society mission to Central Africa. His experiences in Africa were recounted in his obituary in the *British Medical Journal*:

At Khartoum he first met Gordon, and further on Emin Pasha, whose knowledge of natives and local conditions was later to prove so helpful to the band of missionaries. The journey from the Nile to the Great Lakes was fraught with danger and hardship, but eventually Felkin and his companions reached Uganda. In February 1879, he was presented to King M'tesa, whose personal physician he then became. Soon afterwards an anti-missionary movement commenced, and Felkin and his party went in great danger of their lives. His pluck and ready wit did not desert him, and he issued a warning to the king that should any harm come to the missionaries a great disaster would befall the tribes. As a sign that this should be so he foretold that the sun should be darkened; the eclipse duly occurred at the expected time, and Felkin was established as a 'great medicine man'. Much of his time in Uganda was spent in the study of local diseases, and he also made anthropological measurements of the pygmies. He left Uganda with the envoys of King M'tesa to Queen Victoria, and returned with them safely to the Nile, thus destroying an old superstition that no white man could journey to the Great Lakes and back without losing his life. His next expedition was to Zanzibar, where he lived for three years and worked with the explorers Schweinfurth, Buschta, Junker, and Sir Harry Johnston. His interest in the welfare of the natives made him a strong opponent of the slave trade, and he became a very active member of the Anti-Slavery Society.²

Clearly his missionary activities were adventurous; however, the story of Felkin using the eclipse to suggest shamanic powers is interesting in that it foreshadows his career as a magician, and it is possible that it was a story he liked to recount to impress later audiences with his apparent intuitive use of the elements.

In 1881 Felkin returned to Edinburgh to complete his medical studies and a year later married Mary 'Polly' Mander, the daughter of his father's employer at Mander Brothers. His African adventures had broadened his outlook as a medical practitioner, on 9 January 1884 as a final-year student he gave a lecture to the Edinburgh Obstetrical Society entitled 'Notes on Labour in Central Africa'. This lecture was recalled in full in a paper written in 1999, Felkin's genuine admiration for the African obstetrician is remarkable in the colonial era, as is the fact that his publications are still available:

So far as I know, Uganda is the only country in Central Africa where abdominal section is practised with the hope of saving both mother and child. The operation is performed by men, and is sometimes successful; at any rate, one case came under my observation in which both survived. It was performed in 1879 at Kahura. The patient was a fine healthy-looking young woman of about twenty years of age. This was her first pregnancy ... The woman lay upon an inclined bed, the head of which was placed against the side of the hut. She was liberally

supplied with banana wine, and was in a state of semi-intoxication. She was perfectly naked. A band of mbuga or bark cloth fastened her thorax to the bed, another band of cloth fastened down her thighs, and a man held her ankles. Another man, standing on her right side, steadied her abdomen. The operator stood, as I entered the hut, on her left side, holding his knife aloft with his right hand, and muttering an incantation. This being done, he washed his hands and the patient's abdomen, first with banana wine and then with water. Then, having uttered a shrill cry, which was taken up by a small crowd assembled outside the hut, he proceeded to make a rapid cut in the middle line, commencing a little above the pubes, and ending just below the umbilicus. The whole abdominal wall and part of the uterine wall were severed by this incision, and the liquor amnii escaped; a few bleeding-points in the abdominal wall were touched with a red-hot iron by an assistant. The operator next rapidly finished the incision in the uterine wall; his assistant held the abdominal walls apart with both hands, and as soon as the uterine wall was divided he hooked it up also with two fingers. The child was next rapidly removed, and given to another assistant after the cord had been cut, and then the operator, dropping his knife, seized the contracting uterus with both hands and gave it a squeeze or two. He next put his right hand into the uterine cavity through the incision, and with two or three fingers dilated the cervix uteri from within outwards. He then cleared the uterus of clots and the placenta, which had by this time become detached, removing it through the abdominal wound. His assistant endeavoured, but not very successfully, to prevent the escape of the intestines through the wound. The red-hot iron was next used to check some further haemorrhage from the abdominal wound, but I noticed that it was very sparingly applied. All this time the chief 'surgeon' was keeping up firm pressure on the uterus, which he continued to do till it was firmly contracted. No sutures were put into the uterine wall. The assistant who had held the abdominal walls now slipped his hands to each extremity of the wound, and a porous grass mat was placed over the wound and secured there. The bands which fastened the woman down were cut, and she was gently turned to the edge of the bed, and then over into the arms of assistants, so that the fluid in the abdominal cavity could drain away on to the floor. She was then replaced in her former position, and the mat having been removed, the edges of the wound, i.e. the peritoneum, were brought into close apposition, seven thin iron spikes, well polished, like acupuncture needles, being used for the purpose, and fastened by string made from bark cloth. A paste prepared by chewing two divergent roots and spitting the pulp into a bowl was then thickly plastered over the wound, a banana leaf warmed over the fire being placed on the top of that, and, finally, a firm bandage of mbugu cloth completed the operation. Until the pins were placed in position the patient had uttered no cry, and an hour after the operation she appeared to be quite comfortable.³

His interest in tropical medicine dominated his medical career; his publications include the *Geographical Distribution of Tropical Disease* and an article on the climate of the Egyptian Soudan. He was joint author of *Uganda and the Egyptian Soudan*, published in 1882. In 1884 he obtained the diplomas LRCP and LRCS from Edinburgh University, the following year he received a MD degree from Marburg University.

In 1886, he delivered his first lecture on tropical medicine at Minto House, Edinburgh, and from 1886 to 1896 he held the post of lecturer in

tropical diseases at the Edinburgh Medical School. He also carried out private practice in the city; during this time he took up the study of psychotherapy, translating Hiuger's work and writing a book on hypnotism. It was also in 1886 that the Felkins joined the Theosophical Society, they may have come into contact with Theosophy through a Bible study group they were involved with, which introduced them to Hindu literature.⁴

It would appear that the Theosophical Society did not fulfil the spiritual needs of the Felkins and in March 1894 Dr Felkin and Mrs Felkin were initiated into the Amen-Ra temple of the Golden Dawn in Edinburgh, he took the motto *Finem Respice* ('Have regard to the end').

In 1896 the Felkins moved to London where Robert Felkin undertook specialist work in nervous diseases and gynaecology, at the same time being consulting physician to various companies with tropical interests. The move might have been precipitated by Felkin's involvement in the Golden Dawn, because in December of the same year he became a 5=6 member of the second order, taking the motto *Aur Mem Meearab* ('Light, Water, West'), unusually a Hebrew rather than the usual Latin motto.

By 1900 the tensions which would eventually tear the Golden Dawn apart were coming to a head. Within the order was a group founded by Florence Farr called the Sphere Group, this seems to have represented a mystical rather than magical current. In a long and detailed document entitled 'Instruction issued by S.S.D.D. to Members of the Sphere Group. March 1901' Farr explains a complex process of visualization involving astral travel through an expanding sequence of spheres; the purpose of this was to 'transmute evil into good'. She explained that there was:

no connection with any Egyptian Adept ... We are to consider the axis of our globe as consisting of the following symbols: The Cup of the Stolistes⁵ containing a burning heart. This emblem is to be considered as occupying the central axis and the intermediate spaces of the globe between the axis and the surface.

It will be seen in practice that when the operation of gradual enlargement is being carried out, each Sephiroth widens out like a ray from a central Tiphareth for, in a sense, all operations are commenced from the Sephirothic globe of Tiphareth or the absolute Centre – the centre of the Heart.⁶

Farr went on to outline the way in which each globe should be formulated, the first sphere was to be 'formed astrally over the Headquarters of the Order', while successive spheres were to be nine miles, 2,700 miles, 8,100 miles and so on until the solar system itself is visualized. The motifs of cups, hearts and the heart centre would be important for Felkin and his colleagues in the work they would later undertake.

In 1903 when the Golden Dawn finally tore itself apart, Felkin was amongst those who formed the *Ordo Stella Matutina*. The choice of the name of the order was important and symbolic as Richardson and Hughes point out:

The Stella Matutina is, of course, the Morning Star, or Venus, which happens to be both a morning and evening star. When it precedes the Sun before the dawn it is known as Lucifer, the Lightbearer; when it follows the Sun at dusk, it is known as Hesperus. Either way it brackets the impulse of the original

Golden Dawn and can be glimpsed above the horizon when the Sun itself can no longer be seen.⁷

The sun would also be a motif in Felkin's work; for now he was in contact with entities he called the Sun Masters. One of these was known as teacher Ara Ben Shemesh (abbreviated as ABS), the 'Arab Teacher'. In fact Felkin's guides take on a particularly eastern and solar aspect from this point onwards. He was not, however, content with meeting higher beings on the astral plane and yearned to meet them in the flesh. Between 1906 and 1914 became increasingly occupied with meeting the Secret Chiefs and travelled Europe looking for them.

1903 was a year of many changes for Felkin: his wife Mary died and this seems to have caused him to reaffirm his commitment to esoteric Christianity through involvement with the Community of the Resurrection, with whom he spent some time in retreat. The Community had been founded in 1892 by Charles Gore, later a prominent bishop. The Community was one of Anglican priests, who took a vow of celibacy and lived communally. The Community of the Resurrection still exists and is based in Mirfield, Yorkshire, a brief perusal of their website gives no suggestion that they currently espouse esoteric doctrines; however, in the 1900s a number of the Community were interested in Rosicrucianism, in particular one Father Fitzgerald who was instrumental in Felkin's decision to emigrate to New Zealand.

In 1906 Felkin married Harriet Miller, a clairvoyant with the motto, *Quaestor Lucis*, seeker of the Light (QL).

According to King in 1906, Felkin believed he had found what he was looking for: a professor, his adopted daughter and another gentleman, all who he believed were in fact Rosicrucians. The professor's adopted daughter had claimed to be the niece of Anna Sprengel (the Secret Chief who authorized the founding of the original Golden Dawn), and also claimed that her aunt was a member of the same organization as herself.⁸

The following year Felkin was initiated into several new paths. In January he joined an Edinburgh lodge of the Freemasons, by March he was a Master Mason. On 11 April 1907 Felkin was initiated into the Societas Rosicruciana by the Supreme Magus William Wynn Westcott.

It was in 1910 that Felkin met Rudolf Steiner and was genuinely impressed by him: he perceived Steiner as the link to the German Rosicrucian orders and consequently confirming Felkin's beliefs about the Secret Chiefs of the Third Order. In late 1910 Felkin, not being able to personally attend the instruction of Steiner, consulted ABS about his choice of representative – Nevill Meakin. Meakin was approved by ABS and soon was sent to Berlin as Felkin's emissary. Prior to his departure he was conferred the Grade of Adeptus Minor, in a ceremony where A. E. Waite himself acted as Chief Adept.

Neville Gauntlett Tudor Meakin (c. 1876–1912), was a member of the Stella Matutina: he had met the Felkins in 1909, through a mutual friend.⁹ Meakin is a somewhat shadowy figure; he was born in Ambleside, his baptism is recorded as taking place in Ambleside on 1 June 1876 and his father is named as Henry Meyers Meakin. In 1881 he was living with his mother, Roberta Meakin in the St George's Cottage Home Orphanage,

in Ocle Pritchard,¹⁰ where she was the manager of the establishment. The 1891 census lists him as a scholar of Fettes College in Edinburgh. According to Bentham, when he was 21 Meakin's stepfather, a Rev. Meakin, told him that his real name was Tudor and gave him some family papers, which showed him to be the rightful heir to the Grand Mastership of the Order of the Table Round.¹¹ This order had, according to Meakin, been in existence since the time of King Arthur and had passed through generations of his family, admittedly with a break of three hundred years; it was then revived by Meakin's grandfather. This seems unlikely to be anything more than a fanciful explanation of the origins of the order. Meakin's mother died on 1 May 1909; she is described as the wife of Henry Meyers Meakin, there does not seem to have been any stepfather and the name 'Tudor' does not appear on any record. However, Meakin's grandfather was the Rev. John Alexander Deverill Meakin (1805–73). He obtained a BA degree from St John's College, Cambridge and was ordained in Norwich Cathedral on 8 June 1828. After spending a few years as a curate in East Anglia, he became vicar of St Mary's, Speenhamland (a suburb of Newbury, Berkshire) in 1834 and remained the incumbent until his death in 1873. As yet there is no evidence to suggest he was the source of his grandson's claim. Neville Meakin co-authored with Hugh Tempest Sheringham two books, one entitled *The Court of Sacharissa*, which was published by Heineman in 1904, and *The Enemy's Camp*. He also wrote an article called 'The Dream', which was published in the *Occult Review*; he is credited for the revision of the Portal Grade ritual of the Stella Matutina. He wrote *The Assassins – A Romance of the Crusades* under the name Neville Myers Meakin, this is the only example of his using his father's middle name as his own.

On 18 June 1910 Meakin met Wellesley Tudor Pole (1884–1968). Meakin feared he would die without an heir, for he was suffering from tuberculosis, and was actively seeking a possible replacement for the Grand Mastership of the Order of the Table Round. Finding Wellesley Tudor Pole was the fulfilment of his best hopes, for Pole not only also claimed Welsh royal blood, but also was intimately linked with the grail legends. Pole and three female friends had discovered a blue bowl in a well at Glastonbury; the bowl was of mystical significance to Pole and his circle, which included the famous playwright and educator, Alice Buckton. The bowl and the well would resonate with Felkin as the cup and water motif from the Sphere group. Meakin was drawn into Pole's circle and incorporated some of his ideas about the reopening of the Celtic sites into his Arthurian scheme within his Order. Meakin visited the Oratory in September 1910 and soon after began to initiate Pole into the Order of the Table Round.

In the meantime, Meakin had other interests: Edward Waite commented in his notebook:

*March 16, 1911: EOL gone to Cairo, largely on Bahai business, but has had 3rd Order papers on Tree of Life. These to be transcribed and shown to SR.*¹²

What Baha'i business might Meakin have been on in Cairo? 'Abdu'l-Baha was due to visit the British Isles later that year and it seems reasonable to suppose that Meakin was finalizing travel arrangements. It would seem that

'Abdu'l-Baha was also impressed with Meakin, as Louis Gregory records in his pilgrim's notes:

Pleasure was expressed at seeing 'Abdu'l-Baha look so well. He replied that He felt well. I am glad that you overlook my shortcomings and receive me so cordially. His beautiful face became illumined by a smile and He answered: 'You are welcome, very welcome! I have waited for your coming and (indicating Mr Meakin) have a special guide to take you around.'¹³

So what relevance were Felkin and his circle inferring in the Baha'i teachings? Felkin's astral guides were now solar and this is reflected in the mottoes of Meakin, *Ex Oriente Lux* (The light from the East) (EOL) and of Andrew Cattanaach, *Esto Sol Testis* (Be a witness to the Sun) (EST). Andrew Cattanaach was a Baha'i from at least 1913¹⁴ and appears on voting lists into the 1920s, he was a member of Stella Matutina, but little is known about him. Their primary contact with the Baha'is may have been Wellesley Tudor Pole, who had first encountered the Baha'i teachings in Constantinople in 1908,¹⁵ possibly through the American Baha'i Stanwood Cobb (1881–1982) who was working at the university in Constantinople at the time. There is solar imagery in the Baha'i writings, indeed, Baha'u'llah refers to himself as the 'Sun of the Iqan' (*shams al-Iqan*). However, there may be a simpler inference, 'Abdu'l-Baha may have been supposed by Felkin to be one of the elusive Secret Chiefs, perhaps an earthly embodiment of Ara Ben Shemesh. Certainly the Baha'i teachings on the unity of East and West would have resonated with *Aur Mem Meearab* and *Ex Oriente Lux*, underpinned by Pole and his Grail quest, with all the symbolism that entailed.

In September 1911 Felkin met 'Abdu'l-Baha in London at the home of Lady Blomfield.¹⁶ Felkin was given two ringstones; he would later pass these on to Maurice Chambers, one ring was subsequently lost in Egypt but the other was later passed to a Baha'i family in New Zealand. No record of the meeting remains; however, a letter exists written to Maurice Chambers from 'Abdu'l-Baha when Chambers was in Egypt at the end of the First World War waiting to go home, but trying also to get to Palestine to see Abdu'l-Baha. In this letter 'Abdu'l-Baha remarks on Maurice's 'teacher', mentioning that he had met him, 'the honoured Dr Felkin', in London.

Meakin's premonition of his death before he could secure the succession of the Order came true; shortly before he was due to initiate Pole and Felkin, he died on 4 October 1912. His address at the time of his death is recorded as 47 Bassett Road, North Kensington; the National Probate Calendar names the executor of his will as Hugh Tempest Sheringham, with whom he had written two books. Sheringham would later become editor of *The Field* magazine and a noted authority on fishing; however, he does not seem to have shared Meakin's interest in the esoteric.

Felkin consulted Arthur Edward Waite (1857–1942) another Golden Dawn practitioner about the matter of the Grand Mastership of the Order of the Table Round and eventually, when Felkin settled in New Zealand he took all the signs, symbols and rituals of the Order with him. Wellesley Tudor Pole no longer gave the matter serious consideration.¹⁷ Pole wrote¹⁸ to Harriet Felkin arguing the impossibility of Felkin becoming head of the Order of the Table Round when he was not a member of the family, despite

attempts of the last Grand Master, Neville Meakin, to invest him, this suggests Pole was at least open-minded about the claims which Meakin made to the antiquity of the Order. Indeed, perhaps the most extraordinary thing about Meakin is that Steiner, Felkin and Pole, all intelligent men, took him so seriously, and that 'Abdu'l-Baha entrusted him to be the guide of Louis Gregory, there must have been more to him and the Order of the Table Round than the existent records show.

In 1912 Felkin and his second wife Harriet and his daughter Ethel visited New Zealand for the first time. Felkin had been recommended to a group calling themselves the Society of the Southern Cross, based in Havelock North, by Father Fitzgerald of the Community of the Resurrection. This first visit lasted three months and saw the foundation of the Whare Ra Temple.

Felkin was in Germany when war broke out in 1914; he returned to England and joined the Home Guard, two years later his health broke down and in 1916 he settled permanently in New Zealand. Felkin's activities are described by Pat Zalewski:

During the ten years Felkin lived at Whare Ra he ran the temple like a military operation. Classes were held on week nights for Outer Order members in which esoteric philosophy and ritual were taught. On weekends he held classes for Inner Order members to hone their knowledge to a fine point. These included ritual, Enochian pronunciation and meditative exercises in the vault. By 1926, the year of Felkin's death, the Inner Order had grown to over 100 members, with an unspecified number in the Outer Order. The Inner Order group was an extremely wealthy one and had members in many of the key local bodies throughout the Havelock North and Hastings area and collectively wielded a tremendous amount of power ...¹⁹

He continued with his medical and esoteric work until his death on 28 December 1926. He was buried facing Whare Ra, dressed in the robes of a grand master of the Order of the Table Round.

Conclusions

Felkin was clearly a gifted man, with many facets to his life and work but what does his life mean in terms of the relationship between magic and religion in the 21st century? Modern thinking neatly divides up religions, leaving little room for multiple religious identities. This is partly because of the treatment of Religious Education in schools, where children are taught that there are six major world religions and because of time constraints, these are reduced almost to caricatures, with little consideration that some experiences, for example mysticism, might cut across several traditions at once. The concept that religions are distinct from each other reinforces the concept of rivalries and individual choice: personal choice is of course a modern phenomenon. The Internet allows a seeker to access arcane knowledge in seconds; the slow pace of religious tradition has been speeded up so that there is no longer room for inference, ambiguity and relevance, now that direct information can be obtained from Haifa, Rome or Mecca. Whilst it is true that small fringe groups within mainstream faiths can have a disproportionate presence on the Internet, it has never been easier to obtain accurate information and in a multicultural nation actually meet with people of different faiths, sample

their beliefs and cultures before making decisions about them. A further change has been the decline of Christianity and the cultural supremacy of the Church of England. Felkin, along with most of his contemporaries was an Anglican; furthermore, he was a practising Anglican, a missionary and collaborator with the Community of the Resurrection, yet he saw no conflict between Anglicanism and his occult work; indeed, he saw them as complementary. This is because his understanding of Christianity was not entirely orthodox. In the passage quoted below, which is taken from a talk he gave to the sira in New Zealand in February 1921 describing the history of the Rosicrucian Society and the life of its founder Christian Rosenkreutz:

Now these twelve were possessed or imbued by the idea that the Christianity of that period was only a distorted image. They were filled with the greatness of Christianity, yet they were forced at times to appear to be inimical to it as then practised. Their great aim was to procure a synthesis of all religions, note merely as a fraction, but also as a result of practical spiritual life; and they wished to elucidate, if possible, that Christianity was the culmination of all the various religious systems which had preceded it.

(emphasis added)²⁰

And in the same address:

The revelation that he gave them was called by these twelve the true Christianity, the Synthesis of all Religions.²¹

Felkin's understanding of Christianity was that it was an all-embracing system that could synthesize all other religions: this idea was fairly widespread in occult circles and the distinction between an occult order and a religion allowed such ideas room to flourish. In the early years of the 20th century it was problematic to declare oneself anything but an Anglican, but the existence of auxiliary religious and spiritual organizations, orders and lodges allowed spiritual experimentation without forfeiting the almost tribal loyalty to the Church of England felt by most English people. The decline of the Church of England as a social force and the rise in the working with non-Christian deities by occultists has been almost concurrent (although probably unrelated): this has resulted in many occultists preferring to be labelled as 'Pagan' if they choose a religious label at all.²²

So Felkin was both an Anglican Christian and an occultist, but was he a Baha'i? His understanding of all religions being one would have made acceptance of the Baha'i teachings as they were understood in the West at the time a simple step. But did he accept 'Abdu'l-Baha as one of the Secret Chiefs he had been searching for? Unless further evidence emerges that will never be known for sure; however, his affiliation as a Baha'i is confirmed by the highest authority:

We have been asked, however, to state that inasmuch as Mr Maurice Chambers, who is known to be one of New Zealand's earliest Baha'is, himself testifies that Dr Felkin was a Baha'i and, in fact, that it was Dr Felkin who taught Mr Chambers the Faith, there seems to be no reason to doubt that Dr Felkin was a believer.²³

Interestingly there is no mention of Felkin on the website of the NSA of the Baha'is of New Zealand.

What did he hope to achieve by setting up esoteric orders in New Zealand and what was the attraction of these remote islands? Admittedly New Zealand had a pleasant climate and the demographic to allow Felkin to set up a medical practice, but so did plenty of other places. His introduction to the Society of the Southern Cross by Father Fitzgerald was, of course, significant but perhaps there was a deeper reason going back to the Sphere Group and the concept of a world-enveloping spiritual network. Just as Wellesley Tudor Pole was working to reawaken the heart centres of the British Isles, Felkin may have been thinking globally, wanting to physically create a global spiritual network. Another Theosophist who was known to Felkin was the explorer Percy Fawcett (1867–c.1925) who along with his eldest son, disappeared under unknown circumstances in 1925 during an expedition it was claimed intended to find 'Z' – his name for what he believed to be an ancient lost city in the uncharted jungles of Brazil. Correspondence has recently come to light that indicated that rather than looking for a lost city, Fawcett was intending to set up a theosophically-based community in the heart of the Brazilian jungle. As yet it is pure conjecture but this would seem to be a similar concept to that of Havelock North in the southern hemisphere, it may be that they intended these communities to be the nuclei of a worldwide spiritual network.

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Sacred Text, Social Hierarchy, World Polity: The Journey of a Single Sentence That Shaped a World Religion

Ismael Velasco

Abstract

Among the central tropes of Baha'i socio-political theology is a single sentence from the Persian Bayan which, alluded to in Baha'u'llah's Kitab-i Aqdas became, in Shoghi Effendi's interpretation, the 'myth of origin', in the sense of a starting point in sacred narrative, for the Baha'i Administrative Order structuring the Baha'i community, and for the Baha'i World Order envisaged as its culmination, ultimate purpose and eventual fruit. The passage in question states, in Shoghi Effendi's translation, 'well is it with him who fixeth his gaze on the Order of Baha'u'llah'. Shoghi Effendi's interpretation of that passage as alluding to a sacred socio-political entity which is the hallmark of the Baha'i revelation and is anticipated as the embodiment and structure of the millennial promise of the unification of humankind, represents a radical interpretive leap, given that the passage in the Persian Bayan in its most intuitive reading refers, not to an institutional idea, but to the compilation and arrangement of sacred Babi texts. At the heart of this seemingly incompatible usage lies the single word nazm, which may be translated as both order and arrangement.

The present paper will explore the interpretive trajectory of the word nazm, from its roots in the earliest Qur'anic hermeneutics dating from the 2nd Islamic century, to its complex articulation in the Bab's writings, including various instances in the Persian Bayan and in the Kitabu'l-Asma'. It will contextualize these occurrences in the Bab's subtle and esoteric (batini) cosmogony of the universe as Text, including the simultaneity and parallelism of levels of interpretation, within which the apparently innocuous passage of the Bab is revealed to be charged with cosmological, communal and messianic dimensions, which it will be argued form the implicit substratum or at least demonstrate a substantive correlation to the counter-intuitive, although not exclusive interpretation of that passage by Shoghi Effendi as denoting likewise a communal, global and, in its deepest level, a messianic cosmic order.

Keywords

Baha'i
Babism
hermeneutics
intertextuality
Shoghi Effendi
World Order
nazm
Qur'an
millennialism
Batin

1934: The Night of the Long Knives; Mao's Long March; Stalin's Great Terror; Franco's suppression of the Asturian Uprising; the anti-Jewish riots in France surrounding the Staviski Affair; Mussolini's first meeting with Hitler. Shadows heralding the impending triple darkness of World War II. Amidst the overcast skies of that oppressive year, Shoghi Effendi's treatise, 'The Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh, 'burst upon the Bahá'ís', in the words of Ruhyyih Khanum, 'like a blinding white light'.'

In this boldest of expository works, amidst the collapsing fracas of crumbling systems and institutions, Shoghi Effendi unveiled before the Baha'i community perspectives on Baha'i scripture and Baha'i identity that had heretofore been inconceivable. Ruhiyyih Khanum recalls,

I remember when I first read it I had the most extraordinary feeling as if the whole universe had suddenly expanded around me and I was looking out into its dazzling star-filled immensity; all the frontiers of our understanding flew outwards; the glory of this Cause and the true station of its Central Figures were revealed to us and we were never the same again.²

A clear example of this expansion of meaning, the sudden vistas disclosed by Shoghi Effendi in this remarkable work, is his unprecedented interpretation of two pregnant passages from the Mother Books of the Baha'i and Babi dispensations respectively. The first concerns paragraph 181 of Baha'u'llah's *Kitab-i Aqdas*. The second refers to the sixteenth section of the third chapter of the Persian Bayan of the Bab. Shoghi Effendi writes,

To what else if not to the power and majesty which this Administrative Order – the rudiments of the future all-enfolding Bahá'í Commonwealth – is destined to manifest, can these utterances of Bahá'u'lláh allude: 'The world's equilibrium hath been upset through the vibrating influence of this most great, this new World Order. Mankind's ordered life hath been revolutionized through the agency of this unique, this wondrous System – the like of which mortal eyes have never witnessed.

Shoghi Effendi continues,

The Báb Himself, in the course of His references to 'Him Whom God will make manifest' anticipates the System and glorifies the World Order which the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh is destined to unfold. 'Well is it with him,' is His remarkable statement in the third chapter of the Persian Bayán, "who fixeth his gaze upon the Order of Bahá'u'lláh and rendereth thanks unto his Lord! For He will assuredly be made manifest. God hath indeed irrevocably ordained it in the Bayán."³

Thus does Shoghi Effendi link in these passages the Bab's prophecy regarding the Order of Baha'u'llah, or *al-nazm Bahá'u'llāh* in the original Arabic, to paragraph 181 of the *Kitab-i Aqdas*. This *nazm*, or order, Shoghi Effendi in turn relates to the Baha'i Administrative Order and ultimately to the Baha'i Commonwealth that he anticipates as the fruit of Baha'u'llah's revelation.

Ten years later, as the night and chill of the Second World War began at last to dissipate, we find the same exegesis repeated in the Guardian's only book, *God Passes By*, in yet clearer detail. He declares,

It should be noted, ... that in the third Váhid of this Book [the Persian Bayan] there occurs a passage which, alike in its explicit reference to the name of the Promised One, and in its anticipation of the Order which, in a later age, was to be identified with His Revelation, deserves to rank as one of the most

significant statements recorded in any of the Báb's writings. 'Well is it with him,' is His prophetic announcement, 'who fixeth his gaze upon the Order of Bahá'u'lláh, and rendereth thanks unto his Lord. For He will assuredly be made manifest. God hath indeed irrevocably ordained it in the Bayán.' It is with that self-same Order that the Founder of the promised Revelation, twenty years later – incorporating that same term in His Kitáb-i-Aqdas – identified the System envisaged in that Book, affirming that 'this most great Order' had deranged the world's equilibrium, and revolutionized mankind's ordered life. It is the features of that self-same Order which, at a later stage in the evolution of the Faith, the Center of Bahá'u'lláh's Covenant and the appointed Interpreter of His teachings, delineated through the provisions of His Will and Testament. It is the structural basis of that self-same Order which, in the Formative Age of that same Faith, the stewards of that same Covenant, the elected representatives of the world-wide Bahá'í community, are now laboriously and unitedly establishing. It is the superstructure of that self-same Order, attaining its full stature through the emergence of the Bahá'í World Commonwealth – the Kingdom of God on earth – which the Golden Age of that same Dispensation must, in the fullness of time, ultimately witness.⁴

Thus the 'Order' of Baha'u'llah mentioned by the Bab and proclaimed by Baha'u'llah is said by Shoghi Effendi to refer to the administrative order outlined in the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, to the structure of the contemporary Baha'i community, to the anticipated Baha'i World Commonwealth and, in the last analysis, to the Kingdom of God on earth which has been the promise and goal of all previous revelations. The originality and suddenness of Shoghi Effendi's interpretation of the word 'order' (*nazm*) in these passages has been attested to by Hand of the Cause Hasan Balyuzi who related that until Shoghi Effendi linked the passages of the Bayan-i Farsi and the Kitáb-i Aqdas to the Baha'i Administrative Order and the Baha'i World Commonwealth, the references to order (*nazm*) in both texts were understood by Baha'is to refer to no more than Baha'u'llah's literary style.⁵

The same is recounted by Ali Nakhjavani in an article on the Order of Baha'u'llah published in the Persian periodical *Payam-i Bahá'í*. Nakhjavani explains that formerly in Iran, in study classes dedicated to the Kitáb-i Aqdas, the word *nazm*, which Shoghi Effendi variously translates as 'World Order', 'world's equilibrium', and implicitly 'System', was understood to refer to the *shiva* (elegance, skill, perfection) of Baha'u'llah's verses, that is, to the pre-eminent beauty of his style. The word *tartib*, another word for order or arrangement, which the Guardian translates in the Aqdas as 'mankind's ordered life', was understood to refer to the organizing structure of Baha'u'llah's Kitáb-i Aqdas. The prevalent interpretation was that while the Bab's Persian Bayan was clearly divided into sections and chapters, constituting the *tartib* or structure of the Bayan, Baha'u'llah's Most Holy Book was not thus arranged. The absence of such strict division in the Aqdas made its arrangement altogether novel and unique (*badi'*) and was hence understood to have revolutionized the preceding (literary) structure (*tartib*) established by the Bab. At the same time the beauty of his style (*nazm*) had eclipsed the literary skill of ages past.⁶

The hermeneutical distance between this exclusively literary interpretation of the verses of Bayan 3: 16 and Kitab-i Aqdas 181 on the one hand, and Shoghi Effendi's metaphysical and socio-political translation of the same terms on the other, could not be greater. The leap of vision that it demanded from Baha'is was as dramatic as it was characteristic of the general broadening of perspective that Shoghi Effendi imparted to the Baha'i community in the course of his ministry.

The Hermeneutical Context of the Word *Nazm*

To understand the transition from a primarily literary to a primarily spiritual and socio-political interpretation of the concept of order (*nazm*) in the writings of the Bab and Baha'u'llah, it is helpful to explore the semantic context within which subsequent Baha'i interpretations emerged. From a purely grammatical perspective, it made sense for early Baha'i scholars to approach the meaning of *nazm* in Bayan 3: 16 and Kitab-i Aqdas 181 from a literary and stylistic perspective, since in contemporary literate usage, the word *nazm* had, and retains, primarily literary connotations. Hence Francis Joseph Steingass (1825–1903), in his classic *Comprehensive Persian-English Dictionary*, the standard reference work for 19th-century Persian usage, defines the word *nazm* as follows:

(v.n.) Joining (pearls) in a row; composing (verses); order, arrangement; a string (of pearls); poetry, verse (opp. to *nathr* 'prose composition').

The literary connotations are thus very clear, particularly in its associations with versified composition, while entirely absent are the spiritual and socio-political connotations perceived by Shoghi Effendi.

Such literary connotations remain present to this day in Islamic theological discussions of the Qur'an. For instance, in a well-known compendium of Islamic belief based on the Persian letters of the Nakhshbandi Sufi master Shaykh Ahmad Shirindi (d. 1624 CE), and compiled by the late Turkish scholar and publisher Hüseyin Hilmi Işık (d. 2002 CE), we read the following:

Qur'an al-karim is nazm-i ilahi (the divine verse). The lexical meaning of nazm is to string pearls. It has been called nazm also because words are arranged side by side like pearls. Each poem is a nazm. The Qur'an's words are in Arabic. However, Allahu ta'ala [God, exalted be Him] arranged these words side by side. These words were not arranged by any human being.⁷

Thus the word *nazm* is used to denote the divinely inspired arrangement of Arabic words into the holy verses of the Qur'an. This interpretation has its roots in contemplations that crystallized into doctrine in the course of the 2nd to 3rd Islamic centuries (9th to 10th centuries CE), when a philosophical ferment took place that generated the rich heritage of Islamic thinking on the *nazm* of the Qur'an.

While the word *nazm* does not appear in the Qur'an, yet from the time of the great 'Abbasid scholar al-Jahiz (776–869 CE), doctrinal exploration of *nazm* was carried forward by al-Sijistanî (d. 928 CE), al-Bakhî (d. 933 CE) and Ibn al-Ikhshid (d. 937 CE). In the same period al-Rummanî and

his contemporary al-Khattabî (d. 998 CE) contributed meditations on the psychological effect of the *nazm* of the Qur'an in their *al-Nukat fî l'jaz al-Qur'ân* and *Bayan l'jaz al-Qur'ân* respectively. The development of this doctrine culminated the following century in the work of Abd al-Qahir al-Jurjanî (d. 1078 CE) in his seminal *Dalâ'il al-l'jaz*, and in the writings of al-Zamakhsharî (d. 1144) and Fakhr ad-Din al-Razî (d. 1209) CE.⁸

The perspective underlying these explorations is explained by Al-Jahiz specialist Dr Jamal el'Attar, in a paper presented to the British Society for Middle Eastern Studies (BRISMES) in 1992. Dr el-'Attar writes:

According to al-Jahiz, Arabic had been miraculously enriched, initiated and divinely nurtured until it reached its pre-Qur'anic destined stage of maturity whereby Arabic and the Arabs were both to experience and witness an unusual charming Arabic, the Qur'an, that had an unprecedented arrangement (*Nazm*), a new literary configuration that assembled their very own alphabets and words yet which lies beyond their literary level of superiority, and stays unsurpassable.⁹

In al-Jahiz's own words:

The Qur'an differs from all the known rhymes of poetry and prose. It is a prose whose rhythm is not modelled on that of poetry or rhymed prose (*saj'*, "سجع") and whose configuration [*nazm*] stands as a magnificent evidence and as a great Divine proof.¹⁰

Al-Jahiz thus sees the miraculousness of the Qur'an's *nazm* in its distinctive poetic prose – an interpretation which already prefigures the traditional Baha'i interpretation of the *nazm* verses of the Kitab-i Aqdas as related by Ali Nakhjavani and Hasan Balyuzi. Al-Jahiz's interpretation, as noted earlier, was taken up by subsequent Islamic thinkers, becoming integral to the theological doctrine of *i'jaz*, or the inimitability and miraculousness of the Qur'an – a doctrine which was in the fullness of time to be incorporated and refined in the writings of the Bab and Baha'u'llah.¹¹

In recent years, partly in response to orientalist analyses of the Qur'an which stressed its lack of structural coherence, Muslim thought on the Qur'anic *nazm* has shifted from a concentration on the linguistic style of the Qur'an to the overall arrangement and sequential ordering of the Qur'anic verses. While the earliest commentators tended, like western scholars, to see the Qur'an in terms of a more or less arbitrary collection of isolated verses and series of verses, not necessarily related in a sequential manner, a current of thought most closely associated with the Pakistani school of Hamîd al-dîn Farâhî (d. 1930) and his disciple Mawlânâ Amîn Aḥsan Iṣṣāḥî has emerged which sees, on the contrary, a subtle but significant set of principles organizing in a coherent way the structure of the Qur'an. This structural coherence is referred to by such scholars as the *nazm* of the Qur'an.¹² This line of reasoning is not wholly dissimilar to the early Baha'i approach to the *tartib* or structure of the Aqdas in relation to the Bab's Bayani prophecy regarding the *nazm* of Baha'u'llah, as related by Mr Nakhjavani.

From the above discussion, it becomes apparent that the early Baha'i approach to the *nazm* of Baha'u'llah is inspired in a significant

way by the hermeneutical tradition of Islam, and in particular the rich heritage of linguistic and literary analysis associated with the doctrine of *i'jaz* or inimitability of the Qur'an. In their discussions of *nazm*, Muslim commentators, paving the way for the early Baha'i commentators of a later age, focused on the elegance and originality of Qur'anic prose in relation to the Arabic tongue and the compositions of writers and poets, and also on the distinctive arrangement of Qur'anic verses.

There is evidence to suggest however, that *nazm* was not used in exclusively literary ways already previously to the Bab's revelation. In a telling exception to the rule of a literary usage of the word *nazm*, the great Iranian philosopher Mulla Sadra wrote that the essence of philosophy is *nazm al-'alam* (the order of the world).¹³ This rare usage of *nazm* prefigures the philosophical subtext of the Bab's discussion of this theme, and resonates with Baha'u'llah's distinctive usage of the term in later years. It is not dissimilar to neoplatonic concepts of order, as expressed by Plotinus, who writes about the 'the cosmic order which leads all in accordance with the right'.¹⁴

One more element needs to be highlighted by way of context before analysing the concept of *nazm* in the Bab's Persian Bayan. While for Sunni Islam the concept of the *nazm* of the Qur'an is legitimized by the authority of notable and respected scholars, for Shi'i Muslims the *nazm* of the Qur'an has been further hallowed by a sacred tradition from the eighth Imam himself, 'Abu'l-Hasan 'Ali ibn Musa ar-Ridha. The tradition is significant for our purposes insofar as it is found in a text that the eminent Canadian scholar of the Bab's writings, Todd Lawson, has identified as an important source of Islamic traditions in the Bab's Qayyum'u'l-'Asma.

The tradition in question, after recounting its *isnad* or chain of transmission going back to Ibn Babuwayh, states:

He said one day in making a strong proof that the signs and miraculous nature of the Qur'an lie in its *nazm*: '[The Qur'an] is God's firm cord and sure handle, his exemplary path (*t@ariqa*) leading unto Paradise and away from the fire. It has not been created for a specific time, nor to be a difficulty for the tongues, for it was not made for one time over another but rather as a guidance and a proof for all of mankind. Falsehood is neither in it nor behind it, and it was sent down from the All-Wise, the Most Praised.'¹⁵

The title of the chapter containing this tradition is as interesting as the tradition itself, and is translated by Lawson as follows:

On the reason that the Qur'an was revealed in Arabic and that its miraculousness is in its arrangement (*naz@m*) and its meaning is newly applicable through the course of time, and by it each succeeding generation will be refreshed until the Day of Resurrection.¹⁶

What is most crucial in this tradition is not only the stress on the evidentiary character of the Qur'an's *nazm*, which sacralizes for Shi'i Muslims the ideas put forward by the religious scholars we have briefly reviewed above. It is also the emphasis in the title of this chapter on the contingent character of the meanings produced by this *nazm*, to be refreshed 'until the

Day of Resurrection'. This perspective in Bahrani's *Burhan* anticipates, as we shall see, one of the most distinctive features of the Bab's approach to *nazm*, that is, its dispensationary nature.

The Concept of *Nazm* in the Bab's Persian Bayan

Nazm has a significant presence in the Persian Bayan, with two whole sections (*abwabs*) of that book being devoted to its exposition (*vahid* 3, *bab* 16; and *vahid* 6, *bab* 1). The first of these two sections is the source of the Bab's announcement of the *nazm* of Baha'u'llah, which Shoghi Effendi writes, 'deserves to rank as one of the most significant statements recorded in any of the Bab's writings'. A reading of this statement in the context of the whole passage in which it appears, shows how very radical and unexpected Shoghi Effendi's exegesis truly is:

Bayan III, Bab 16¹⁷

It is not permissible to act save in accordance with the writings of the Point.

The sum of this chapter is this:

It is not permissible to act save according to the writings of the Point of the Bayan, for in this Dispensation the writings of the Letters of the Living proceed from the Sun of Truth Himself. Thus, sacred verses (*ayat*) pertain to the Point, supplications (*munajat*) pertain to the Messenger of God, commentaries (*tafsir*) to the Imams of guidance, and scientific treatises (*suvar-i-'ilmiyyih*) to the Gates. Yet all these traces arise from this Ocean, hence they all may be witnessed in the most noble form in the Primal Reality.

For in the presence of God and the estimation of them that are endowed with knowledge no grandeur compares to that of being swift in the path of faith, which is the most precious of all things, and all bounties are under its shadow. From the setting of this Sun, to the rising of Him Whom God shall make manifest, the authoritative texts will remain exalted and unchangeable, and the Letters of the Living and all the believers in God and in the Bayan shall be within their pale.

Nevertheless, should someone soar in the knowledge of one of the ordinances of God, be it a fundamental pillar (*usul*) or a secondary teaching (*furu*), and produce a text of his own behoof, he will be resurrected within His shade only if he doth not transgress the bounds of the Bayan. Otherwise, he shall not be worthy of mention in the presence of God and in the presence of them that are endowed with understanding. For rather, in this Dispensation it is the inner truth of issues that is mostly looked upon, the import of arguments and proofs being less. Rejoice in that which the Point of the Sun of Reality hath revealed, for His writings are like the light of the sun in relation to the glimmer of the stars. Is there any comparison? Exalted, immeasurably exalted is God above such conceptions.

However, they must strive in the science of letters, in the numerical linking of the divine Names, in the stringing together of words of like meaning and in the conjoining of compatible writings in the appropriate place. For it is permissible for each person to arrange the order of the Bayan (*nazm-i Bayan*) as appeareth sweetest. Inasmuch as though it manifests itself after a thousand fashions, with one volume differing from another by reason of the

ordering of verses or the conjunction of words, yet shall it all return to the soul of the Bayan (*kulli raja' nafsi Bayan*); nor shall a single word be added or excised therefrom.

It will be apparent that no order (*nazm*) shall be adopted save that it be sweeter (*ahla*) and better arranged (*anzam*) than the order (*nazm*) that preceded it. Well is it with him who fixeth his gaze on the Order of Bahā'u'llāh (*tuba li man yanziru illa'l-nazm Bahā'u'llāh*) and rendereth thanks unto his Lord! For He will assuredly be made manifest. God hath indeed irrevocably ordained it in the Bayan. Verily, God raiseth whatsoever He willeth and bringeth down whatsoever He desireth.

The best arrangement (*nazm*) manifests itself in accordance with specific limits (*hudud*). Should there be, for instance, ten prayers, each of one hundred lines (*bayts*) it is best that they should be arranged together; nor should the five styles of revelation be mixed. The verses are set apart in their loftiness, the supplications in their celestial exaltation, the commentaries on their seat of grandeur, the scientific treatises (*kalimat-i 'ilmiyyih*) in their horizon of sanctity, and the Persian writings in their gladsome heights. Thus the necessity for such ordering is not lost to the attentive observer.

This is of the bounty of God to the learned in the Bayan, that they may busy themselves in the Cause till God doth comfort them through the Manifestation (*bi-zuhur*) of that for which they beseech God in the daytime and in the night season. And should He be made manifest and none be found to recognize Him, yet shall His shaping (*murratib farmayad*) of the Bayan stand out as the Sun amidst the stars, at a time when He perceives everyone to be wrapped in veils.

In like manner, the Point of the Bayan hath written three commentaries of the Qur'an: two in the style (*nahj*) of verses throughout, and one a commentary on the Suratu'l-Baqara in the manner (*nahj*) of a scientific treatise (*shu'un 'ilmiyya*). A single word from His commentaries stands unequalled by the commentaries of every commentator, from the moment the Qur'an began to descend till the rising of Him Who setteth forth commentaries (*ta irtifaa'-e u tafsir namudeh*). And whoso compareth the Sun's radiance to the glimmer of the stars, his gaze is unworthy of mention before God.

Will ye not, then, perceive?¹⁸

From these clear verses it becomes apparent that the purely literary interpretation of the *nazm* of Baha'u'llah is not to be ascribed to the general simplicity of Baha'i thought before Shoghi Effendi.¹⁹ Rather, such a reading was the natural interpretation to adopt on the basis of the evident (*zahir*) meaning of the text. The Bab makes clear that the *nazm-i Bayān* lies 'in the science of letters, in the numerical linking of the divine Names, in the stringing together of words of like meaning and in the conjoining of compatible writings in the appropriate place'. Hence in Professor Nader Saiedi's *Logos and Civilization*, which includes the only extended analysis thus far published of Bayan 3: 16 and its link to Aqdas 181 and Shoghi Effendi's interpretation, we read that:

The fact that in the Persian Bayan the concept of order refers to the writings of the Bāb is beyond any doubt. Similarly, the fact that the reference to the 'order' of Bahā'u'llāh also applies to the order of the writings of Bahā'u'llāh and His restructuring of the Bayan is completely obvious.²⁰

He thus validates the early Baha'i interpretations of *nazm*. He sees them, however, as preliminary layers of interpretation that, while not superseded by Shoghi Effendi's expositions and still valid today, are nevertheless exegetically incomplete, in need of further unveiling to grasp the metaphysical and social nuances that it contains. These nuances are not self-evident, so that, while the literary interpretation of the concept of *nazm* in this passage may be accessed at face value, Shoghi Effendi's exposition of it as referring to the present Baha'i Administrative Order and the future Baha'i Commonwealth is itself in need of further exegesis.

Professor Saiedi's approach is to see in the revealed word not only a literary, but also a cosmological dimension. To understand this perspective one must bear in mind two concepts. First, is that in the covenantal theology of mystical/theosophical Shi'ism, contact with the transcendent God is mediated through a hierarchy of divine manifestations occupying four subordinate degrees of authority. The first such manifestation of the Unknowable God occupying the highest degree of authority is the metaphysical entity sometimes designated as 'the primal Point' out of which have been generated all created things (a broad equivalent to the Johannine concept of the Logos or Word of God at the beginning of fourth Gospel); followed by the Messenger of God (the Prophet Muhammad) who mediates human contact with the divine; followed by his divinely appointed and infallible heirs and successors (the twelve Imams); followed by the four successive representatives or 'gates' (*abwab*) of the twelfth and last Imam, held to have gone into occultation in the year 260 AH and expected to return as the Promised One of Shi'i Islam on the Day of Resurrection.

The second concept is that the Bab divided his writings into five styles or grades (*shu'un*) comprising verses, supplications, commentaries, scientific treatises and Persian writings. The last of these modes (Persian writings) appears to be on occasion subsumed into the previous four modes, so that sometimes, as in the beginning of Bayan 3: 16 the Bab speaks of only the first four styles, and sometimes, as occurs late in the same text, he distinguishes all five styles.

The key to Professor Saiedi's exegesis lies in the link that the Bab draws in Bayan 3: 16 between the four principal modes or genres of scripture identified by the Bab (verses, supplications, commentaries and scientific treatises) and the four corresponding levels of covenantal authority in Twelver Shi'ism (Primal Point, Messenger, Imams, Gates). Thus each scriptural style, in Bayan 3: 16, corresponds to a station or degree of divine authority:

It is not permissible to act save according to the writings of the Point of the Bayan, for in this Dispensation the writings of the Letters of the Living proceed from the Sun of Truth Himself. Thus, sacred verses (*ayat*) pertain to the Point, supplications (*munajat*) pertain to the Messenger of God, commentaries (*tafasir*) to the Imams of guidance, and scientific treatises (*suvar-i-'ilmiyyih*)

to the Gates. Yet all these traces arise from this Ocean, hence they all may be witnessed in the most noble form in the Primal Reality.

(Bayan 3: 16)

In other words, the literary form or *nazm* in which God reveals His Word is inextricably linked in the Bab's writings to the hierarchical form in which God exerts His authority in the world. Therefore Bayan 3: 16, as Professor Saiedi writes, 'recapitulates the basic structure of the entire revelation of the Bāb'²¹ not only in a literary, but, by implication, in a theological and covenantal way.

Hence any reformulation of scripture must imply, from a Babi perspective, a reformulation of religious authority and thus a reconfiguration of the Covenant of God. In the past, the four scriptural genres identified at the beginning of Bayan 3: 16 (verses, supplications, commentaries, scientific treatises) were associated with separate repositories of religious authority (the Point, the Messenger, the Imams and the Gates). In the Bab's dispensation, Saiedi notes, these four genres have been revealed by one and the same the same Person, reflecting not only a stylistic shift, but a Covenantal shift in the authority of the Manifestation of God, who now speaks with the voice of the Gates, the Imams, the Messenger of God and the Primal Point himself, reflecting the eschatological climax associated with the coming of the Day of Resurrection.²² This shift in religious authority in turn implies a change in religious hierarchy, and hence in the administrative and ultimately social order of the Babi community.²³

But the *nazm* of the Bayan, in Saiedi's exposition, goes even further than the implicit order of religious authority. Numerological symbolism of all kinds was very popular in the Bab's time, and constitutes one of the most common literary devices to be found in his writings. And among the rich numerological allegories found in the Bab's writings, the numbers four and nineteen are regarded by Saiedi not only as the organizing principle of the Persian Bayan itself, and of the Bab's hierarchy of authority and social order, but as the cosmological structure of all things (*Kullu Shay'*) according to the Bayan.²⁴ Saiedi identifies the formula 'In the name of God, the Inaccessible, the Most Holy', the four words and nineteen letters of which open the Persian Bayan, as the underpinning structure of the Bab's revelation.²⁵ He draws on the first chapters of the Persian and the Arabic Bayans for evidence, where the Bab links the structure of his books to the number of all things (*Kullu Shay'*), as in the following passage in the exordium that opens the Persian Bayan as translated by Dennis McEoin:

God, indeed, is powerful over all things. He structured the creation of all things according to the number of 'All Things' [*Kullu Shay'* = 361], through the decrees which He caused to come down from the court of His holiness and which He caused to shine forth from the sun of His own bounty, in order that all things, through the mention of all things, might reach a state of perfection for the sake of the manifestation of the next resurrection, so that He might reward each thing with the reward due to all things.²⁶

The number of 'all things', in abjad notation, is equivalent to 361, or nineteen times nineteen. Underlying this perspective is what Saiedi describes

as 'the unity and parallelism between the realms of creation (*takvín*) and revelation (*tadvín*).²⁷

Thus the *nazm* or order of the Bayan, based on the numerical structure of four and nineteen, while outwardly concerned with the written corpus of the Bab and the Letters of the Living, is implicitly addressing the metaphysical order of all things. 'In the Persian Bayan', writes Saiedi, 'the order of the Bayan is simultaneously the order and structure of authority, covenant, sacred history, and the society which embodies those writings.'²⁸

By implication, Saiedi explains, the *nazm* or order of Baha'u'llah proclaimed by the Bab, while ostensibly concerned with the arrangement of Baha'u'llah's verses and restructuring ('*murratib farmayad*') of the order of the Bayan, is of necessity referring also to the ordering by Baha'u'llah of all things, since all things are implicated in the order of the divine Book. By the *nazm* of Baha'u'llah, Saiedi argues, 'the Báb is referring simultaneously to the modes of Bahā'u'llāh's revelation, the order of His writings, the order of the Kitab-i-Aqdas, and the New World Order of Bahā'u'llāh'.²⁹

Professor Saiedi's illuminating interpretation is somewhat weakened by his occasional lack of references for key arguments and ideas in his discussion. A close reading of the Persian Bayan shows, however, that Professor Saiedi's arguments, even where supporting references may at times be absent, are nevertheless strongly grounded in the text of the Bayan. Thus, his argument regarding the whole of creation being contained in the Bayan, and specifically in the opening invocation, 'In the name of God, the Inaccessible, the Most Holy', although not linked to specific Bayani passages in Professor Saiedi's discussion, is clearly drawn from Bayan 3: 8, where the Bab writes that all that to which the quality of being a 'thing' is applied is contained in the Bayan, and all the Bayan is contained in its opening invocation, *Bismillah al-'Amna, al-Aqdas* ('In the name of God, the Inaccessible, the Most Holy'), and all the *bismillah* in the first letter, b, which itself stems from the Primal Point.³⁰

Likewise, Professor Saiedi's linking of the four Qur'anic rivers of paradise with the four modes of revelation, also not referenced to the Bayan, evidently stems from Bayan 6: 1, where the selfsame point is clearly made. The parallelism he sees between *tadvín* and *takvín*, the creation of the Book and the creation of the world, unreferenced in Professor Saiedi's book, is stated in Bayan 2: 4.

Finally, as has been said, a substantial part of Professor Saiedi's exegesis is the importance not only of four, but of nineteen in the *nazm* of the Bayan, mirroring the structure of all creation. However, a reading of Bayan 3: 16 will fail to show any particular link to the number nineteen, except, tacitly, in the references to the Letters of the Living, whose writings are specifically set apart from the Bayan, the writings of the Bab himself. While the lack of references to supporting passages of Bayan 3: 16 in relation to the number nineteen might lead to the perception of a forced reading on the part of Professor Saiedi, one need only turn to Bayan 6: 1 to see that, again, Professor Saiedi's discussion is based on his careful readings of the Persian Bayan.

In that section of the Bayan, the Bab enjoins that the *nazm* or arrangement of the Bayan should consist of no more than nineteen volumes arranged into four groups. The first three should consist of verses; the following four of supplications; the next six of commentaries; and the last

six of scientific discourses. Thus we find the link clearly made between the *nazm* of the Bayan and the numbers nineteen and four. This arrangement is, moreover, linked not only to the word *nazm* in this chapter, but also in passing to the word *tartib* which likewise appears in conjunction with *nazm* in the Kitab-i-Aqdas, again underscoring the enduring validity, though not exclusiveness, of the literary interpretation of that passage.

To recapitulate then, the Bab adopts the time-honoured and primarily literary concept of *nazm* associated with the *ijaz* or inimitability of the Qur'an and embeds it in a mystical metaphysics of divine revelation that sees the Word of God as the agent and pattern of creation.

We recall Alessandro Bausani's penetrating analysis of Baha'i scripture in the context of the Persianate literary tradition:

The classical Persian literary tradition in general, and particularly in its mystical literary expressions, is distinctly anti-realist, symbolist ... when the mystical tradition, and classical Persian literature in general, speaks of *real love* and *allegorical love*, it intends exactly the inverse of that which we would understand by the same expression, real love being love for the absolute, allegorical love being love between a man and a woman. The axiom: 'the invisible is of superior rank to the visible, the absolute is superior to the relative, the eternal to the contingent, that which is above is more real than that which is below' is the basis not only of the *substance*, but also of the literary *form* of Persian mysticism.³¹

Hence, the ordering of the realm of the Word of God, or *tadvin*, takes precedence over that of the realm of creation (*takvin*), yet is inseparably linked to it by a hierarchy of analogical relationships that begin with the four words and nineteen letters of the opening invocation of the Bayan, through the four modes of revelation corresponding to the four degrees of spiritual succession, and the nineteen chapters and nineteen holy figures comprising the Bayan, through the cosmic arrangement of all things (*kullu shay*) according to the number of nineteen times nineteen, or 361.³² As we read in the opening of Bayan 3: 8: 'whatsoever is in the macrocosm is in the Bayān' ³³ Thus the ordering of verses is indissolubly linked to the ordering of the whole of creation.

In this context it is therefore highly significant that the Bab, in his Kitabu'l-Asma', should name God the Best Order (*Anzam*). This is the very same word, *anzam*, that occurs in Bayan 3: 16 to denote the superiority of successive arrangements of the Bayan. In the Kitabu'l-Asma' the Bab invokes God in the following terms:

In the name of God, the Best Arrangement of the Paramount Order. God, there is no God but Him, the Superlative arrangement of the Finest Order. Say: God is the Unsurpassed Arrangement above every pre-eminent Order.

(*Bismillah al Anẓam al Anẓam. Allah. La elaha illa Huwa al Anzam u'l Anẓam. Qul: Allahu Anẓam fawqa kulle zi Anẓam.*)³⁴

And again a few pages later:

In the name of God, the Greatest Arrangement of the Most Excellent Order. Praise be to God, besides Whom there is none other God. He is the

Incomparable Order of the Matchless Arrangement. The Glory of God (*Bahā min Allāh*) rest upon the first unity (*al-wāḥid al-awwal*).

(*Bismillah al Anzām al Anzām. Al.H.amdu lillāh alladhi lā elAha illā huwa. al-Anzām u'l Anzām. wa innamā al-Bahā'u min Allāh 'al a alWāḥid il Awwal.*)³⁵

Thus *nazm* takes on the nature of a divine attribute, a name of God that transcends the contingent qualities of literary shape or social structure; an ultimate, spiritual dimension which our own attempts at order may at best reflect or approximate. And it seems to me that it is precisely in the tension between our human yearnings and approximations and the transcendent Order associated with God Himself that the heart and function of the Bab's concept of *nazm* may be found. For indeed in all the discussions of *nazm* in the Bayan one central aspect has so far passed unnoticed, and that is the instruction to the Bab's followers to compile their own Bayan from the Bab's writings in accordance with a *nazm* or order within the limits (*hudud*) set by God in Persian Bayan 3: 16 and 6: 1, and reflecting the utmost balance (*i'tidal*).

This, the human arrangement of the writings of the Bab, is a dimension of *nazm* that, although constituting the bulk and substance of the Bab's discussion in Bayan 3: 16 and 6: 1, has not benefited from detailed attention. Indeed, as is made clear in both the Persian Bayan 3: 16 above and also in Bayan 6: 1, the *nazm-i Bayan* does not refer primarily to the order of the Persian Bayan itself, nor to the Arabic Bayan for that matter, nor even to the Bab's arrangement of his revealed output, but rather to the compilation and arrangement by the Bab's followers of the wider corpus of the Bab's writings, which he collectively designates the Bayan. It is in fact we, his followers, who are challenged to reflect the cosmological structure of the divine Word in our human ordering and compilation of the Bab's writings, a cosmological structure that may find expression in a multiplicity of forms. For as Bayan 3: 16 informs us, the *nazm-i-Bayan* may manifest itself 'after a thousand fashions ... yet shall it all return to the soul of the Bayan (*nafs-i Bayan*)'.

And this appears to be ultimately the purpose of arranging the legacy of the Bab in accordance to the principles underlying the *nazm-i-Bayan* – to bring us in touch with the very soul of the Bayan, the *nafs-i Bayan* that is the vitalizing spirit underlying the principles and words of the Bab's teaching. In this light we may also understand the stress, in both Bayan 3: 16 and Bayan 6: 1 on recognizing the common spirit animating the diversity of literary expression in the Bab's writings. In Bayan 3: 16 we read:

Thus, sacred verses (*ayat*) pertain to the Point, supplications (*munajat*) pertain to the Messenger of God, commentaries (*tafasir*) to the Imams of guidance, and scientific treatises (*suvar-i-'ilmiyyih*) to the Gates. Yet all these traces arise from this Ocean, hence they all may be witnessed in the most noble form in the Primal Reality.³⁶

And in Bayan 6: 1 we find:

Behold the Bayan: it hath been ordained that it is divided into volumes; but all these volumes stem from but one source of manifestation, and this water runs through all the letters of the Unity. It is thus that there is no Creator,

Nourisher, Quickener, Slayer, beside God. This first unity is His creation, which demonstrates in the world of potentialities the unity possible in the contingent world.³⁷

The aim is to find, in the multiplicity of words and letters, the Primal Reality that is the soul of the Bayan (*nafs-i-Bayan*). It follows from Babi theology that had previous generations been in touch with the *nafs* (soul, self, identity) of their holy texts, rather than outward expressions only, they would have recognized the same *nafs* pulsating in the words of the subsequent divine manifestation. Instead, they took pride in their own understanding of the sacred words while failing to see their source, the Primal Reality, now made manifest in the new revelation from God. Hence the cautions in Bayan 3: 16 and 6: 1 against superficial considerations:

Nevertheless, should someone soar in the knowledge of one of the ordinances of God, be it a fundamental pillar (*usul*) or a secondary teaching (*furu*), and produce a text of his own behoof, he will be resurrected within His shade only if he doth not transgress the bounds of the Bayan. Otherwise, he shall not be worthy of mention in the presence of God and in the presence of them that are endowed with understanding. For rather, in this Dispensation it is the inner truth of issues that is mostly looked upon, the import of arguments and proofs being less. Rejoice in that which the Point of the Sun of Reality hath revealed, for His writings are like the light of the sun in relation to the glimmer of the stars. Is there any comparison? Exalted, immeasurably exalted is God above such conceptions.

(Bayān 3: 16)

And, from Bayan 6: 1:

Take care in the Day of Manifestation of the truth you make not of these words a veil from Him, for the whole of the Bayān is His previous manifestation and He is most wise of all concerning that which he has revealed.³⁸

By focusing on the *nafs-i-Bayan*, or soul of the Bayan, rather than its diverse expressions, we are expected to perceive the difference between essential and contingent qualities. This is made particularly clear in Bayan 3: 16 in the analogy of the sun amidst the stars, which occurs not less than three times in this brief section. Before the first occurrence of this analogy, the Bab clarifies his use of the term 'sun':

From the setting of this Sun, to the rising of Him Whom God shall make manifest, the authoritative texts will remain exalted and unchangeable, and the Letters of the Living and all the believers in God and in the Bayan shall be within their pale.³⁹

The 'Sun' then in the first instance is the Bab, who rises once more in Him Whom God shall make manifest. The Letters of the Living and the generality of believers occupy a rank subordinate to the writings of that Sun. The same relationship as that between the Manifestation of God and his followers and disciples likewise applies to the divine Word:

Rejoice in that which the Point of the Sun of Reality hath revealed, for His writings are like the light of the sun in relation to the glimmer of the stars. Is there any comparison? Exalted, immeasurably exalted is God above such conceptions.

Here Bab's writings are likened to the light of the sun, this time in relation to the glimmer of the stars. In a subsequent paragraph of Bayan 3: 16 we further read:

And should He be made manifest and none be found to recognize Him, yet shall His shaping (*murratib farmayad*) of the Bayan stand out as the Sun amidst the stars, at a time when He perceives everyone to be wrapped in veils.

This time it is Him Whom God shall make manifest's shaping of the Bayan that will stand out as the sun amidst the stars. This theme is of such importance, that the Bab devotes the entirety of Persian Bayan 8: 1 to expounding how 'Him Whom God shall make manifest is in His acts as the sun, whilst the deeds of all men, when in conformity to the good pleasure of God, are like stars'. Finally in Bayan 3: 16 the Bab explains:

A single word from His commentaries stands unequalled by the commentaries of every commentator, from the moment the Qur'an began to descend till the rising of Him Who setteth forth commentaries (*ta irtifaa'-e u tafsir namudeh*). And whoso compareth the Sun's radiance to the glimmer of the stars, his gaze is unworthy of mention before God.

Here the Bab's Qur'anic commentaries are once more compared to the sun amidst the stars in relation to the commentaries of every commentator. The challenge then is to recognize the one Sun through its variegated rays in each dispensation, the *soul* within the verses, rather than focus on the reflection of that light in the multiplicity of human thought and words, which are like stars before the sun.

The purpose of the Bab's instruction to his followers to compile his writings in accordance with a *nazm* derived from the fundamental principles of his theophanology (theology of manifestation)⁴⁰ symbolized by the numbers four and nineteen, is, as with so many of his ordinances, to prepare the Babi community to recognize Him Whom God shall make manifest.

This is made unequivocal in Bayan 6: 1. There, in addition to the instruction to compile up to nineteen volumes of the writings of the Bab grouped in accordance to the four key modes of revelation, a further injunction is given to subdivide each volume into sections from the One (*Wahid*) to *Mustaghāth* (meaning 'He Who is Invoked' = numerical value of 2001), that is, made up of between one and 2001 verses. This instruction comes immediately after discussion of the coming of Him Whom God will make manifest. *Mustaghāth*, as is well known, is the maximum length of time separating the advent of one Manifestation from the next as described in the Persian Bayan 7: 10, where the Bab writes:

For only God knows how long it will be from the beginning of a Manifestation until another, but if God please, it will not be more than the number of *Mustaghāth*.⁴¹

Thus the very subdivision of the *nazm-i-Bayan* is meant to generate a sense of expectation and receptivity. The Bab writes in Bayan 6: 1:

The fruit of this *nazm* is that perchance on the Day of Resurrection (*yawm al-qiyāmat*) all the believers in the Bayān may be guided through the assistance of the letters of unity⁴²... for that Day is the Day of Tests.⁴³

We have already seen that the *nazm-i-Bayan* (Order of the Bayan) embodies in all its human multiplicity the single *nafs-i-Bayan* (soul or self of the Bayan), which in turn we are told is Him Whom God shall make manifest 'in His previous manifestation'. Our recognition of Him Whom God shall make manifest is therefore itself the test of our recognition of the soul of the Bayan (*nafs-i-Bayan*) permeating the order of the Bayan (*nazm-i-Bayan*) as Bayan 6: 1 also indicates.

But why make the human compilation of the texts of the Bayan, that is of the writings of the Bab, subject to individual preference rather than to a uniform arrangement as was the case with the Qur'an? Why subject the *nazm-i-Bayan* to human whims? For the Bab, in Bayan 3: 16, places considerable stress on the multiplicity of forms that Babi scripture may take in accordance with the individual preferences of the compiler:

For it is permissible for each person to arrange the order of the Bayan (*nazm-i-Bayan*) as appeareth sweetest. Inasmuch as though it manifest itself after a thousand fashions, with one volume differing from another by reason of the ordering of verses or the conjunction of words, yet shall it all return to the soul of the Bayan (*kulli rAja' nafs-i Bayan*); nor shall a single word be added or excised therefrom.

The instructions for the division of volumes and the collation of texts by genre or mode of revelation therefore take on the character of no more than general guidelines. In Bayan 6: 1, for instance, having suggested that the *nazm* of the Bayan should consist of 'no more than nineteen volumes', the Bab explicitly stresses that this is not strictly binding and obligatory.

This multiplicity of expression itself has a function. Immediately after stressing in Bayan 3: 16 that everyone should order the Bayan 'as appeareth sweetest' and 'after a thousand fashions', we are told that the Promised One Himself will bring His own order to the Bayan:

It will be apparent that no order (*nazm*) shall be adopted save that it be sweeter (*ahla*) and better arranged (*anzam*) than the order (*nazm*) that preceded it. Well is it with him who fixeth his gaze on the Order of Baha'u'llah (*tuba li man yanziru illa'l-nazm Baha'u'llah*) and rendereth thanks unto his Lord! For Him Who "will assuredly be made manifest". God hath indeed irrevocably ordained it in the Bayan. Verily, God raiseth whatsoever He willeth and bringeth down whatsoever He desireth.

The first sentence of this verse echoes Bayan 3: 4 which is entirely dedicated to this theme, explaining that 'in each manifestation of the Will the words of the Lord of that manifestation are, in consequence of His intrinsic

exaltation, more elevated than those from earlier times' ⁴⁴ Thus the sentence regarding the superiority of each subsequent order alludes to the dispensationary nature of *nazm*.

For the Bayan, this dispensationary aspect is made clear in the ensuing prophetic announcement which links the *nazm* of Baha'u'llah to the expectation of Him Whom God shall make manifest. There thus appears to be, on the one hand, the *nazm* created by the followers of a messenger in each dispensation, and on the other hand, a *nazm* created by the new messenger at the beginning of each new revelation. The use of the word *anzam* in this context, bearing in mind its use in the Kitab al-Asma', simply underscores this reading.

Even greater clarity may be obtained from a subsequent passage in Bayan 3: 16:

This is of the bounty of God to the learned in the Bayan, that they may busy themselves in the Cause till God doth comfort them through the Manifestation [*bi-zuhur*] of that for which they beseech God in the daytime and in the night season. And should He be made manifest and none be found to recognize Him, yet shall His shaping (*murratib farmayad*) of the Bayan stand out as the Sun amidst the stars, at a time when He perceives everyone to be wrapped in veils.

In like manner, the Point of the Bayan hath written three commentaries of the Qur'an: two in the style (*nahj*) of verses throughout, and one a commentary on the Suratu'l-Baqara in the manner (*nahj*) of a scientific treatise (*shu'un 'ilmiyya*). A single word from His commentaries stands unequalled by the commentaries of every commentator, from the moment the Qur'an began to descend till the rising of Him Who setteth forth commentaries (*ta irtifaa'-e u tafsir namudeh*). And whoso compareth the Sun's radiance to the glimmer of the stars, his gaze is unworthy of mention before God.

Here we are explicitly told that the Promised One will give His own shape (*murratib farmayad*) to the Bayan. The meaning of this process is explained by analogy ('In like manner') to the Bab's own Qur'anic commentary, which may be said to have reshaped the *tartib* and *nazm* of the Qur'an. His Qur'anic commentary was merely one among a host of Qur'anic commentaries produced by the followers of Islam, but stood in relation to them like the Sun amidst the stars, even as the *murratib* or shaping of the Bayan by the Promised One will stand out like the Sun amidst the stars of the Babi community.

As if this was not clear enough, Bayan 6: 1 concludes:

The science of the Bayan is linked to the knowledge of its descent from its beginning to its end. For that which hath descended in the beginning conforms to the Qur'anic strictures (*ahkam*), while subsequently the Bayani laws appeared. One must not therefore on account of the beginning remain ignorant of the end, or by reason of the end, remain in ignorance of the beginning ... but the divine purpose is most evident in the most recent verses.⁴⁵

So we find that the first irruption of the Bayan into creation took shape within Islamic law, although in a manner that reshaped already the prevailing order,⁴⁶ giving way in the fullness of time to an altogether new order and structure (*nazm va tartib*), which, taking the form of a new body of scripture, also implied,

as we have seen, not only a cosmic renewal but a social and political reform as well. Clearly, the Bab's expectation is that the new Order of Baha'u'llah will likewise unfold gradually, first of all within the context of the Bayan's ordinances. As with the Bab's Qur'an commentary, the *nazm* of him who 'will assuredly be manifest' will stand out as the sun amidst the stars, to be recognized by those whose hearts are looking upon 'the inner truth of issues' rather than "arguments and proofs", and who are in touch with the 'soul of the Bayan'.⁴⁷

Against this backdrop the Bab's reluctance to commit his followers to a rigid scriptural structure and foster a multiplicity of scriptural forms is designed to create a space, on the one hand, for the emergence of the Promised One's distinctive *nazm* without questions of order and structure clouding 'the inner truth of issues'; and on the other hand, for his spiritually attuned followers to fix their gaze on the soul of the Bayan rather than its outward form, that they might recognize its new manifestation in the beginning, no less than in the end.

In conclusion, we may say that the reference to *nazm* in the Bab's Bayan, while on a superficial first reading referring simply to the literary arrangement of the Bab's corpus by his followers, is pregnant with rich metaphysical, covenantal, communal and dispensational allusions subordinated to a logic of eschatological expectation. Shoghi Effendi, by identifying the *nazm* of Baha'u'llah in Bayan 3: 16 with the famous passage in the Kitab-i Aqdas 181; with the Administrative Order outlined in the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha; with the future Baha'i World Commonwealth anticipated in his own World Order letters, and with the Kingdom of God on earth promised in ancient scriptures, released and intensified the chilaistic, covenantal and dispensational charge already implicit in the allusive language and complex theology of Bayan 3: 16 and 3: 61; and filtered it through a uniquely Baha'i hermeneutic of fulfilled eschatology to connect the dreams and labours of a modern Baha'i community to the millennial hopes of the Bab's foremost scriptural text.

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Contributor details

Ismael Velasco is a Research Fellow at Brighton University. He is an interdisciplinary scholar with publications in both the humanities and social sciences in the areas of Bahá'í studies, values and behavior change.

E-mail: mayel.vel@gmail.com

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Endnotes

1. Rúhíyyih Rabbaní, *The Priceless Pearl* 213.
2. Ibid.
3. Shoghi Effendi, 'The Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh', *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh* 146.

4. Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By* 25. See also *ibid.* 324; *Messages to America* 22, 49; *Citadel of Faith* 5; and *Summary Statement – 1947, Special UN Committee on Palestine*.
5. This is reported by former member of the Universal House of Justice David Hofman in 'Shoghi Effendi, Expounder of the Word of God', *The Vision of Shoghi Effendi*, Association for Bahá'í Studies, Ottawa, 1993, 97.
6. Ali Nakhjavani, 'Nigáhí bih Nazm-i-Badí-i-Iláhi', *Payám-i-Bahá'í* no. 149 (April 1992), 17–18.
7. Hüseyin Hilmi Işık, *Se'âdet-i Ebediyye (Endless Bliss)*, fascicle 1, section 25, Waqf Ikhlâs, Istanbul. 1993. Cf. Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi, letter 100 of his *maktubat*.
8. Issa J. Boullata, 'I'jaz', in Mircea Eliade (ed.), *The Encyclopedia Of Religion*, vol. 7, p. 87.
9. Jamal el'Attar, 'A Rich Concept of Arabic / al-'Arabiyya: al-Jahiz's Original View of "Arabic" in relation to the Holy Qur'an', *Democracy in the Middle East*, BRISMES 1992 Annual Conference, 20–33.
10. Cited in *ibid.*
11. Cf. Kavian Sadeghzade Milani and Leila Rassekh Milani, 'The Proof Based on Establishment (*Dalíl-i-taqrír*) and the Proof Based on Verses (*Hujjiyyat-i-ayát*): An Introduction to Bahá'í-Muslim Apologetics', *Journal of Bahá'í Studies*, 7: 4 (1997).
12. See Mustansir Mir, *Coherence in the Qur'an: A Study of Islahí's Concept of Nazm in Tadabbur-i Qur'an*, Indianapolis: American Trust Publications, 1986. Cf. Asma Barlas, 'Believing Women' in Islam: *Unreading Patriarchal Interpretations of the Qur'an*, ch.1, section 2, University of Texas Press (2002). This discussion is potentially relevant to current scholarly debate on the ordering of the Kitáb-i Aqdas, and whether its structure is coherent and intentional or circumstantial and ad hoc, reflecting its progressive revelation and compilation over a period of years. See Nader Saiedi, *Logos and Civilization*, University Press of Maryland, 2000, 213–35, and the references he cites in that chapter to the work of the Mirza Asadullah Fadil Mazindarani, Kamran Ekbal and Anthony Lee.
13. Mulla Sadra, *Al-Hikmat al-Muta'áliyah fí al-Asfár al-'Aqliyyah al-'Arba'ah*, as cited in *Qamus-i Iqan* by Ishráq Khávari, vol. 2, p. 1108. I am indebted to the erudition of Dr Khazeh Fananapazir for this valuable reference.
14. Plotinus (c.250 AD), *Enneads*, IV.3.16, p. 273, Stephen MacKenna/B. S. Page, (translators), Faber & Faber, London, 1969. I am grateful to Sherveen Lotfi for this reference.
15. al-Sayyid Hashim al-Bahrani, *Kitáb al-burhan fí tafsir al-Qur'an*. 4 vols. Tehran, 1375/1955, vol. 1, third Báb, p. 28. I am indebted to John Vahid Brown for locating and translating this tradition.
16. Cited in B. Todd Lawson, *The Qur'an Commentary of Sayyid 'Ali Muhammad, the Báb*, Ph.D. dissertation, McGill University, 1987, 16.
17. The following provisional translation was produced jointly by Will McCants and the present author, with help from Kavian Milani and Vahid Brown.
18. Bayan Farsi, 3: 16.
19. Cf. David Hofman, in 'Shoghi Effendi, Expounder of the Word of God', *The Vision of Shoghi Effendi*, Ottawa: Association for Bahá'í Studies, 1993, 97.
20. Nader Saiedi, *Logos and Civilization*, University Press of Maryland, 2000, 294.
21. Saiedi, *Logos and Civilization* 295.
22. *Ibid.* 295–9.
23. On the link between the metaphysics of spiritual authority in the writings of the Bab and the anticipated administrative and social regulation of the Babi community, see Dennis McEoin, 'Hierarchy, Authority and Eschatology in Early Bábi Thought', in Peter Smith (ed.), *In Iran: Studies in Bábi and Bahá'í History*, vol. 3, Los Angeles: Kalimát Press, 1986, 95–141 (113–22).
24. Saiedi, *Logos and Civilization* 297.
25. Saiedi, *Logos and Civilization* 296.
26. <http://www.bahai-library.org/provisionals/bayan.html>.
27. Saiedi, *Logos and Civilization* 299.
28. Saiedi, *Logos and Civilization* 299.

29. Ibid.
30. This concept is elaborated further in Bayan 3: 12.
31. Alessandro Bausani, 'I Testi Sacri Della Religione Bahá'í', *Saggi Sulla Fede Bahá'í*, Roma: Casa Editrice Bahá'í, 1991, 147–62, (151). Cf. 'Considerazioni Su Alcuni Aspetti Meno Noti Dello Stile Espressivo Bahá'í', *ibid.* 162–73, translated as 'Some Aspects of the Bahá'í Expressive Style', in *World Order*, vol. 13, no. 2 (Winter 1978–79), 36.
32. This brief list does not begin to do justice to the recurrence and symbolical richness of the numbers 4, 19 and 361 in the writings of the Bab.
33. As translated by E. G. Browne, *Selections from the Writings of E. G. Browne*, Moojan Momen (ed.), Oxford: George Ronald, 1987, 341.
34. Author's provisional translation from the *Kitab al Asma'*, 517.
35. Author's provisional translation from *ibid.* 524. I am deeply grateful yet again to the knowledge and generosity of Dr Khazeh Fananapazir for this and the previous reference. In a further striking link to this passage, the concept of the first unity is given extended attention in Bayan 6: 1 as part of the discussion of *nazm*.
36. Author's own provisional translation.
37. Ibid.
38. As translated by E. G. Browne, *Selections from the Writings of E. G. Browne* 375.
39. Author's own provisional translation.
40. A very useful term coined by Juan Cole in his seminal monograph *The Concept of Manifestation in the Bahá'í Writings*, Bahá'í Studies monograph 9, Ottawa: Association for Bahá'í Studies, 1982, 1–38.
41. As translated by E. G. Browne, *Selections from the Writings of E. G. Browne* 390.
42. I am tempted to follow Nicolas in seeing 'letters of unity' in this sentence as denoting the writings of the Bab compiled into nineteen volumes (as per the instructions of the preceding paragraph), the word 'unity' (*vahid*) being numerically equivalent to nineteen. It is also probable however that the term refers to the nineteen Letters of the Living, mentioned later on in the same passage.
43. Bayan 6: 1, author's translation.
44. Bayan 3: 4, author's provisional translation.
45. Author's own provisional translation from the original text.
46. Cf. B. Todd Lawson, *The Qur'an Commentary of Sayyid `Ali Muhammad, the Báb*, PhD dissertation, McGill University, 1987.
47. Bahá'u'lláh too speaks about 'the revelation of the Soul of God that pervadeth all His Laws' (*Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh* 160). Shoghi Effendi would eventually write about 'that World Order that must incarnate the soul, execute the laws, and fulfill the purpose of the Faith of God in this day'. (Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By* xiii); of 'the System designed to incarnate the soul of His Faith' (Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By* 18).

Translation

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Memoirs of a Baha'i in Rasht: 1889–1903

Mīrzā Yahyā 'Amīdu'l-Atibbā Hamadānī. Translated by Ahang Rabbani¹

Abstract

The memoirs of Mīrzā Yahyā 'Amīdu'l-Atibbā Hamadānī, covering the period 1889 to 1903 is one of the sources for the study of the early Baha'i community of Rasht.² The author was a physician in Hamadan of Jewish ancestry. He migrated to Rasht in 1889 and in 1926 wrote his recollections of the events and prominent believers that he had encountered in that city. He passed away two years later in 1347 AH³ [1928 CE].

Keywords

Baha'i Faith
Mīrzā Yahyā 'Amīdu'l-
Atibbā Hamadānī
Rasht
Iran
community history

Translator's Introduction

Rasht is the seat of Gilan province in northern Iran, and occupies the western half of the south Caspian littoral.

The genesis of the Babi and Baha'i Faiths in Rasht dates back to the Babi period, when apparently a number of its inhabitants embraced the faith. By the early 1850s, in the confused state following the Bāb's martyrdom, the Babi community fractured and various pockets of the Babis turned to different Babi leaders for inspiration and guidance. It was around 1271 AH [1854 CE] that one of the Rasht Babis, a certain Karbalā'ī Ibrāhīm Samsār ['dealer of second-hand goods'] Rashtī, went twice to Adharbayjan and met Mīrzā Asadu'llāh Dayyān and became a staunch follower of him, a sentiment that he shared with other Babis in the region as well.⁴ At present, not much is known of these Dayyānīs and they presumably have disappeared as a group.⁵

Around 1270 AH [1853 CE], several Babis migrated from Qazvīn to nearby Lahijan, which was the major town of Gilan at that time. One of them, Siyyid Javād, had been a Shaykhī in Qazvin – which had a robust Shaykhī-Babi community – and succeeded in converting a number of residents to the religion of the Bābī faith. Siyyid Javād, however, threw his lot in with Mīrzā Yahyā Azal and tried to keep his group of Babis isolated from the other Babis of Lahijan who had become followers of Baha'u'llah. On one occasion when Siyyid Javād was away in Qazvīn, one of his associates, Mīrzā 'Alī Ashraf (known later as the poet 'Andalīb), searched out the Baha'is and became convinced that Baha'u'llah was the new Manifestation of God. Soon Mīrzā 'Alī Ashraf succeeded in converting Siyyid Javād as well as other Azalīs of this group.⁶

Sometime earlier, Hājī Nasīr Qazvīnī, a well-known survivor of the battle at Shaykh Tabarsī, and his family had settled in Rasht and commenced trading. Though several of this family were Baha'is and known in the city as

such, no one from Rasht embraced the Faith.⁷ In the 1870s, in Lahijan, Mīrzā ‘Alī Ashraf ‘Andalīb was encouraged by the Qazvīnī Baha’is of that town to migrate to Rasht where he settled in Sarāy Mīrzā Bābā and began teaching the Faith. Soon he was joined by Siyyid Javād Qazvīnī, Āqā Muhammad Ismā‘īl and Āqā Muhammad-Ibrāhīm Lahījānī, who had been taught by ‘Andalīb, and they commenced informing the locals of the Faith of Baha’u’llah.

Through these efforts, a number of locals, including the following, embraced the Cause: Mīrzā Mihdī; Mīrzā Bāqir Bassār and his brothers, Mīrzā ‘Alī and Āqā ‘Alī-Asghar and their families; Mullā Yūsuf-‘Alī and his brother, Āqā Husayn, and their father, Mullā Muhammad;⁸ Karbalā‘ī Qāsim and his brother, Āqā Ridā Zargar; Āqā Rasūl Qannād [‘the confectioner’]; Āqā Muhammad-Javād; and the Sādāt Khams.⁹ By 1296 AH [1879 CE] there were some 20 Baha’is in that town. Over time, their number continued to gradually increase and included Mīrzā Āqā Hakīm [‘physician’] and Mīrzā Ibrāhīm Jadīd and some others. With great caution, they would come together in the evenings for Baha’i meetings.¹⁰

A widespread persecution against Baha’is erupted in 1300 AH [1882 CE], which greatly affected Baha’i communities in several Iranian cities. In Rasht, 11 Baha’is were imprisoned. Hājī Nasīr and another believer died in prison.¹¹

Memoirs of a Baha’i in Rasht: 1889–1903¹² By Mīrzā Yahyā ‘Amīdu’l-Atibbā Hamadānī

Translated by Ahang Rabbani

Author’s Preamble

In the Name of God, the Eternal, the Never-Ending!

Since, in accordance with the instructions of Shoghi Effendi Rabbani, the Guardian of the Cause of God, the friends of God are collecting information on historical events of the Faith in all the cities of Iran, this ephemeral servant, Mīrzā Yahyā ‘Amīdu’l-Atibbā Hamadānī, who, owing to divine grace has for many years been under the shadow of this blessed Cause and has in person witnessed many events in Rasht, I deemed it necessary to write down those events of the Faith’s history in this city in which I have participated. I compose these pages as a tribute and a means of remembrance of the righteous friends and undertake this writing on Safar 1345 AH [August 1926 CE]. I beseech the esteemed reader to offer a prayer of forgiveness and a supplication for divine confirmations upon my soul.

Arrival at Rasht

In 1307 AH [1889 CE], I came to Rasht as a physician. Two other friends, who were also Baha’is from Hamadan, accompanied me as well: Mīrzā Āqā-Chī, the son of Mūsā; and Mīrzā Āqā Jān Ibrāhīm-Zādi. We arrived in Rasht on Wednesday, 22 ‘A1 [16 November 1889]¹³ and took residence in the Caravan-Sarāy of Abū-Tālib, near Masjid Safā, across from Sardār Mansūr’s house.

At the time of our arrival in Rasht, the entire bazaar and all the shops had been destroyed by fire, except a section of buildings across from the homes of the local officials which had remained safe from the fire, belonging to the Prince Kāmran Mīrzā, the famous Nāyibu's-Sāltānih. After three days, we met a certain Mīrzā Ilyās Kalīmī ['the Jew'] Isfāhānī. He was a dealer of second-hand goods. Through him, we rented one of the above-mentioned apartments and took up residence there, so that we would have time to learn the ways and customs of the people of Rasht before assuming our previous professions.

Meeting Other Baha'is

After a month's stay at that location, and at the insistence of my travelling companions, we asked the aforementioned Mīrzā Ilyās about Baha'is in that area. Confidentially, he introduced to us one of the believers, named Āqā Mashhadī Qāsim Zargar ['the jeweller'], son of Mashhadī Rafī' Zargar. With all necessary wisdom and caution, I located him and one early morning went to his shop on the pretext of asking him to design an ink-vessel for my use. In this way I was able to meet him in person.

Two days later, I went again and confidentially stated, 'I am one of your spiritual friends [i.e. a Baha'i] and together with a few other friends have recently arrived in Rasht. I came previously to meet you on the pretext of purchasing an ink-vessel.' On hearing this, however, fear and apprehension that is truly beyond description overcame him.

A week later, I went again to meet him and stated, 'I am Jewish.'¹⁴ At this, he gained utmost confidence, and showed friendship and trust. At my insistence, he named several people and stated that they were among the wronged friends [i.e. Baha'is] who kept their [religious] identity a secret, emphasizing that meeting them had to be done with the utmost wisdom. The friends he introduced included Āqā Mīrzā Āqā Hakīm ['physician'], the son of Dāvūd Hakīm; Āqā 'Alī Arbāb Qazvīnī, the son of Hājī Nasīr the martyr; the Sādāt Khamsih ['the five siyyids'] who were Āqā Siyyid Ridā, Āqā Siyyid Mahmūd, Āqā Mīr[zā] 'Alī-Naqī, Āqā Siyyid Asadu'llāh¹⁵ known as the Barāt-Bāz ['the financier'] and Āqā Siyyid Nasru'llāh.

He gave specific instructions for meeting Āqā Mīrzā Āqā Hakīm. As such, one day I inquired of his residence and went to see him on the pretext of being ill. After six days of association, and at the introduction of the aforementioned Ustād Qāsim Zargar, I expressed my fraternity with him and my convictions [in the Baha'i Faith], but with the utmost vehemence he denied it [that he was a Baha'i].

However, I disregarded his heated denial and repudiation, and the next day returned to see him. Again, he expressed similar sentiments of denial, but with the utmost affection and warmth, I proved that I was a friend of Āqā Mīrzā Āqā Jān Kalīmī Hamadānī. Once he had gained complete trust in me, he flung open the gates of friendship and companionship.

Attending a Baha'i Meeting

Two weeks later he said, 'Today, an hour before dusk, come so we can go to a certain place.' At the appointed hour, together with Āqā Mīrzā Āqā Jān, I went to his house so that together we could proceed to the location he had in mind. On seeing Āqā Mīrzā Āqā Jān, he complained, 'Only one

of you may come with me, as it would not be possible for both of you to accompany me.' As such, Āqā Mīrzā Āqā Jān returned to his house, and then with the utmost caution and prudence we proceeded to the intended destination. Along the way, at times he would hide himself under his 'abā (a traditional cloak), so that the passers-by would not recognize him or discover our intention. That distinguished personage was wearing a silk turban known as Khalīl-Khānī.

After extreme difficulty and struggle, at dusk we reached our destination, the home of Āqā 'Alī Arbāb, who was known in those days as 'Alī Babi. It was there that we attained the presence of the honoured Hājī Mīrzā Haydar-'Alī and the esteemed [Shaykh Kāzim] Samandar.¹⁶ After the customary embracing and pleasantries, Hājī Mīrzā Haydar-'Alī gave an exposition of my background and services to the gentlemen who were present. After this introduction, everyone present had complete confidence and trust in me. After tea was served, we spent the entire night, which was during the spring season, in spiritual discourse and heavenly discussions, which are beyond words to describe and can only be experienced by those who have embarked on this divine journey. The whisper of prayers, the chant of divine verses and the melody of celestial tablets revealed by the Birds of Paradise enthralled our spirits and enchanted our hearts.

We spent the entire night in the presence of the friends and decided to meet the following night, so that our association would be complete. At dawn, when the light of day had not yet broken, and in accordance with wisdom and prudence, we bid our host farewell. Together with Āqā Mīrzā Āqā Tabīb, ¹⁷ I left the residence, and after a while we each took a separate route, I following a guide to my residence. When I arrived, Āqā Mīrzā Āqā Jān inquired of the previous night's events and I shared with him all the details.

Four days later, Ustād Qāsim Zargar, who was fashioning an ink-vessel for me, came by with the promised object and stated, 'Remain here at your house until one hour after nightfall. At that time I will come and meet you and together we will go to the home of Āqā Siyyid Ridā, who is one of the Sadāt Khams.'

During that time, the Mushīru's-Saltanih, who ruled as the governor on behalf of the Nayibu's-Saltanih, was dismissed from office, and the Prince Mu'ayyadu'd-Dawlih, the son of the Hisāmu's-Saltanih – an uncle of Nasiri'd-Din Shah – had become the governor of Rasht. With that, a little more security for the Baha'is was afforded. Even though all meetings had to take place under conditions of great wisdom and prudence, the difficulties and straitened circumstances that had occurred after the tragic martyrdom of Hājī Nasīr during the governorship of 'Abdu'llāh Khān were no longer the state of affairs.¹⁸

At any rate, according to Ustād Qāsim's promise, it was one hour after sunset when we left for the residence of Āqā Siyyid Ridā. As a precaution, at times we walked together and at other times separately, until eventually we reached Āqā Siyyid Ridā's home, and on meeting the friends, we found utmost joy, bliss and pleasure. After tea, we began to discuss. Hājī Mīrzā Haydar-'Alī instructed the gathering on how we should interact and converse with the public in accordance with the conditions of the time. At the end, we recited holy verses and chanted prayers. That night was spent in such a way with our friends. In the morning, we bid each other farewell and left for our own abodes.

Early Teaching Work

During that tense period, I had no fear or trepidation [in teaching the Cause] and spoke about it with several citizens of Rasht with the utmost wisdom, delicacy and caution. It went on like this until 1309 AH [1892 CE], when I became known as being associated with this Sacred Faith [i.e. known as a Baha'i].

The gentlemen, who in secret and without knowledge of each other, met and were engaged in teaching the Cause of God were Āqā Mashhadī Bāqir 'Attār; Mullā Yūsuf Rawdih-Khān; Mashhadī Husayn and his brother Mashhadī 'Alī 'Attār; the illustrious Bassār; Mashhadī Ismā'īl; Āqā 'Alī Arbāb; Āqā Mīrzā Āqā Hakīm; Ustād Qāsim Zargar; Āqā Ridā and Āqā Naqī.

After 1309 AH [1892 CE], when I became known in Rasht as a Baha'i, due to the harassment of the nayibs and farrashes, who were the main instigators of fanaticism, I changed my residence, which was originally across from Government House, to a location behind the church. After being thus separated from my beloved friends and being established behind the church in apartments known as Khajih Arākil Masīhī ['the Christian'], I announced the establishment of my doctor's office. Since at that time there were no sign-makers, I wrote my name and title on a cardboard, hung it over the door and began practising medicine. During leisure time, I would associate with my spiritual friends and the teachers of God's Cause, and at times, I would take seekers to teaching gatherings [i.e. 'firesides'], or invite the seekers to my home.

Some time later, a number of the 'ulamā of Rasht, who expressed goodwill towards me but were harbouring doubts as to whether I was a Jew or a Muslim, invited me one day to profess my faith in Islam in order to gain assurance about my convictions. I proved the validity of Islam in such a manner and depth that no reservation remained for anyone.

The government at the time [in Rasht] was in the hands of the prince the Mu'ayyadu'd-Dawlih. He severely punished a number of ruffians and troublemakers who were harassing the population of Rasht and who caused difficulties for the friends of God as well. At this, the people were thoroughly relieved and pleased. In every regard, the governor was considered favourable towards the people and their needs, particularly towards the much-wronged Baha'i community. Because of this attention by the just governor, the friends, who had been under some strain and had been harassed, gained some measure of ease and tranquillity. The teachers of the Cause were engaged, day and night, in spreading the Faith and the diffusion of the divine fragrance. And due to my profession, I was able to associate with certain prominent citizens and develop friendships, and after gaining their confidence, would introduce them to the honoured Bassār, the teacher of God's Cause. It continued along these lines until 1310 AH [1893 CE].

Prominent Associates

After some time, I befriended one of the eminent authorities of Rasht, Brigadier-General Nusratu'llāh Khān Tālyshī who was in charge of the garrison protecting the Anzālī border [with Russia]. He invited me to his estate situated at Kirkān-Rūd, some four days' journey from Rasht. At the same time that we were departing, my spiritual friends [i.e. Baha'is] also left, Āqā Mīrzā Āqā-Chī also left for Tabriz, and Āqā Mīrzā Āqā Jān for Anzālī.

I was in my office one day when a distinguished man entered and after the customary pleasantries, he introduced himself. He was Hājī Mīrzā Muhammad-Husayn Shīrāzī Barāt-Bāz ['the financier'], the Amīnu's-Sarih, and was one of the partners of Hājī Amīnu'l-Dharb (Zarb) in Tehran. After some exchanges, he stated that he wished to stay in Rasht and asked me to rent him a suitable building for this purpose. He advanced some funds for this purpose as well.

After three days, I found him a house that belonged to the deputy-chief of the tribes around Rasht. He took his residence there. That distinguished personage asked me to transfer my residence to one of the rooms of that house so we could be together. In the course of our association, it became clear that he was a prominent merchant of Shiraz and was a Baha'i. However, he observed utmost caution and would meet with other Baha'is only in secret.

After my two spiritual friends [with whom I shared a residence] had left for Tabriz and Anzalī, I was alone. Therefore, I sent a telegraph to Hamadan asking my brother, Mīrzā Nabī, to come. He arrived three weeks later and joined my medical practice.

Three months later, I left with Brigadier-General Nusratu'llāh Khān for his native town of Talish. My brother was entrusted to Āqā Mīrzā [Muhammad-] Husayn Amīnu's-Sarih. For five or six months, I was in Talish sightseeing and engaged in the practice of medicine.

I then returned to Rasht, since the Cause was growing with the greatest vigour there. With great enthusiasm and spirit, I embarked on propagating the Faith and two individuals enrolled under the banner of the Cause. One was Āqā Hasan, who was known as Arbāb Idārih-Chī Tihirānī, and the other was Āqā Muhammad-Ridā, the brother of Mashhadī Qāsim Zargar.

Darvish Qalandar

In 1312 AH [1894 CE], I left for Hamadan to renew ties of kinship and friendships from the past. I was there for two months when a telegram was received from Brigadier-General Nusratu'llāh Khān inviting me to Talish. As I began to prepare for the journey, I encountered a certain Hājī Qalandar Dervish, who was engaged in teaching the divine Cause. We became friends and when he had completed his services to the Faith in Hamadan, he decided to leave for the Holy Land by way of Rasht and Russia. Three days later, Dervish left and I left shortly thereafter.

On the third day of my journey, I arrived by dusk at a Caravansary in Āvih and once again saw Hājī Ghulām-Husayn Dervish, known as Hājī Qalandar. After staying for one night in Āvih, we left together for Rasht. He stayed for forty days at my house behind the church. He decided to rent a residence so that he could stay longer in Rasht to serve the Cause of God and his own profession. The house that was rented for this purpose was behind Government House and belonged to Muhammad Khān, the governor's chamberlain. I too transferred my residence there. I resumed my practice of medicine and Hājī Qalandar took a position in the bazaar at the shop of Āqā Siyyid Ridā Pūtīn-Dúz ['the boot-maker'] as an engraver. We were together for two years.

On occasions, Hājī Qalandar would recount the history of His Holiness the Primal Point's [i.e. the Bāb's] appearance from the beginning until the end of the incident of the martyrdom of many believers in Shiraz. He would

talk about the appearance [of the Bāb], the conversion of Hājī [sic] Mullā Muhammad-Husayn, the Bābu'l-Bāb, until the departure of His Holiness the Primal Point [the Bāb] for Mecca.

Hājī Qalandar had studied medicine several times during his sojourn in India, which had lasted 32 years and was spent in association with ascetics. He would teach his knowledge of medicine to my brother and I.

In short, I became thoroughly known throughout Rasht at that time. For several reasons, Hājī Qalandar grew weary of his stay in Rasht and decided to visit the Holy Land and pay homage to 'Abdu'l-Bahā. For this purpose, he left Rasht for Badkubih.

Varqā and Ruhū'llāh

After Hājī Qalandar's departure, in 1314 AH [1896 CE] I changed my residence and moved to a house belonging to the late Najaf-Qulī Āqā in the Hasan-Ābād neighbourhood. Early during my stay at the new residence, the illustrious teacher of the Cause, Varqā, and his esteemed sons, Mīrzā 'Azīzu'llāh and Rúhu'llāh – who was in name Rúhu'llāh and in essence truly Rúhu'llāh¹⁹ – came to Rasht from the Holy Land and from the presence of our divine Beloved. They enkindled and enthralled everyone with the spirit of faith.

They spent their first night at the home of Mīrzā Murtidā-Qulī Massāh.²⁰ The second night was spent at Āqā 'Alī Arbāb's house, and the third night at the residence of this ephemeral servant, where the chanting of prayers by Rúhu'llāh enchanted and mesmerized every hearing soul. All the believers were in their presence all three nights, and immensely enjoyed their sweet and awakened discourse.

Thereafter, they left for Zanjan where they stayed a while with Varqā's father-in-law, the honoured Hājī Mīrzā 'Abdu'llāh. After some time, though, the fire of tribulation and persecution raged in Zanjan. The enemies learned of their stay and informed the governor of Zanjan. As a result, Varqā, Rúhu'llāh and two other believers, namely, Hājī Imān and Āqā Mīrzā Husayn were seized and sent to Tehran with bound hands and feet.

Upon arrival in Tehran, the Sipahsālār, who later was titled the Atābak-'Azam, instructed that these wronged ones be imprisoned in the dungeon. After they were in captivity for some time, the assassination of Nasiri'd-Dīn Shah by the hand of Mīrzā Ridā Kirmānī took place in [the shrine of] Shāh 'Abdu'l-'Azīm in 1314 AH [1896 CE]. Subsequently, those two distinguished personages, namely, Varqā and Rúhu'llāh, were brought out of the dungeon and made to drink from the cup of self-renunciation – and thus they hastened to the Supreme Concourse and the Abhā Horizon.

Bahā'i Teachers in Rasht

In that same year, a number of teachers and propagators of the divine Cause arrived in Rasht. They included Hājī Mīrzā Haydar-'Alī; [Shaykh Kāzim] Samandar; Hājī Ghulām-Husayn Dervish Hamadānī known as Dervish Qalandar; Āqā Mīrzā Ahmad Qazvīnī; Āqā Ibn-Asdaq; Hājī Amīn; and Āqā Muhammad-'Alī Khān Baha'i. These were some of the sacred souls that came to Rasht.

After 1314 AH [1896 CE], the illustrious Ibn-Abhar came to Rasht and took his residence in the home of Āqā 'Alī Arbāb Qazvīnī. All the believers would come and attain his presence, and were overjoyed with his discourse.

First Spiritual Assembly in Rasht

A few days later, he invited the friends to elect the first consultative assembly, or spiritual assembly. The believers, with utmost joy and unity, participated in the election and chose the membership of the spiritual assembly.

It was in that gathering that we learned that Jamāl [Burújirdī] had arrived in Rasht and had taken his residence in the abode of Muhammad-‘Alī Qahvih-Chī. The latter was one of the Baha’is and had a teahouse across from Siyyid Abū-Ja’far. His house was close to the office of Hājī Amīnu’l-Darb. It was agreed that several of the friends would ensure that he [Burújirdī] did not associate with any of the friends. In those days, a certain Mihdī Kāshī, who was an engraver, was secretly in contact and aligned with Burújirdī. In short, after a few days, we heard that Burújirdī had departed from Rasht.

Hājī Mīrzā Haydar-‘Alī’s Visit

In 1319 AH [1901 CE], the nightingale of the divine orchard, Hājī Mīrzā Haydar-‘Alī, arrived in Rasht from Tehran on his way to the Holy Land.²¹ He took his abode in the home of Āqā ‘Alī Arbāb Nasīroff.

Back in 1314 AH [1896 CE], I had briefly discussed this mighty Cause with a certain Muhammad-‘Alī Khān, the Mafākhiru’l-Mulk, who was from Isfahan. However, we had agreed that whenever one of the accomplished teachers of the Cause arrived, he would be introduced to him, so that a more thorough conversation could take place. Therefore, at this time I informed the Mafākhiru’l-Mulk, and he met Hājī Mīrzā Haydar-‘Alī in my home, and for three days and nights they held discussions. At the end, he was won over to the Cause and drank his fill from the cup of certitude. He was so attracted and enkindled that it remains indescribable.

The Mafākhir was a merchant, and entered into an agreement with Hājī Mīrzā Haydar-‘Alī to trade this commodity in the course of that year and to split the profits, with the Hājī’s share being sent to the Holy Land. Their discussions ended on that note.

In those days, a certain Siyyid ‘Abdu’l-Karīm, who was from Kashan, together with his family and kinfolk, arrived in Rasht. They took up their residence in my house. I commenced close association and friendship with him and after several discussions about the Cause, he accepted the Baha’i Faith.

One day, the Mafākhir gave his consent that the Siyyid [‘Abdu’l-Karīm] could come each day on behalf of Hājī Mīrzā Haydar-‘Alī and examine the merchant’s books. Siyyid Kāshī [‘Abdu’l-Karīm] remained true to his commitment. Muhammad-‘Alī Khān Mafākhir, on the other hand, after some trades, amassed a considerable profit but did not fulfil his pledge, and consequently God dealt with him justly, too.

However, from the day of his belief until 1335 AH [1916 CE], he accumulated a vast fortune in Rasht, and occasionally would render a service to the Faith. Alas, although confirmations were his lot after he became a believer, disappointment was his fate after he left.

Baha’i Teachers

After Hājī Mīrzā Haydar-‘Alī had departed to attain the presence of ‘Abdu’l-Bahā in the Holy Land, the honoured Bassār commenced teaching the Cause. The names of the teachers who would come to Rasht or who resided

in that town are mentioned here: Hājī Amīn; Ibn-Asdaq, the Shahīd ibn Shahīd;²² Āqā Mīrzā Mīhdī Akhavān-Safā; Āqā Mīrzā Ibrāhīm Khān, titled the Ibtihāju'l-Mulk; Ghulām-'Alī Khān, titled the Mudabbiru'l-Mamālik; Mīrzā Muhammad-'Alī Khān Tīhrānī; and Āqā Mīrzā Āqā Hakīm, the Sārimu'l-Atibbā.

Sympathetic Governor

At that time, the governor of Rasht was [Muhammad-Valī Khān] Amīr-Tunukābunī, the Nasru's-Saltanih,²³ who later was given the rank of *sipah-dār* Azam [Great lieutenant general]. Because of the governor's care, compassion and concern, the divine friends had become exceptionally enkindled and inflamed, exceeding each other in activities and service to the Cause. The esteemed governor, who was attracted to the Faith, was particularly protective of the believers. At all times, reports of Baha'i activities were presented to him, and the believers, with great audacity and without the need for dissimulation,²⁴ would undertake their activities. The illustrious *sipah-dār*, too, would carefully conceal and protect the community.

Teaching Christians

During that period, a Christian priest by the name of Monsieur Marcar, who was of the Protestant denomination, accepted this mighty Cause, frequented the gatherings of the friends and with utmost vigour and enthusiasm was teaching God's Faith. At the same time, Monsieur Schuler, a Protestant priest who was a missionary from the United States to Iran, arrived in Rasht. After a while, Monsieur Marcar befriended him and spoke to him of the Cause. Further, Monsieur Marcar asked the spiritual assembly, 'If you deem it appropriate, a special gathering should be organized and Monsieur Schuler be invited so that a thorough discussion of the Faith can be undertaken.' On behalf of the spiritual assembly, the Ibtihāju'l-Mulk came to me and stated, 'This gathering will be in your house.'

On the night of 17 Rabī'u'th-Thānī 1318 AH [14 August 1900 CE], about 28 of the Christians along with Monsieur Schuler came to my residence. Several teachers of the Faith were present as well.

At first, Āqā Mīrzā Muhammad Khān Baha'i spoke. Afterwards, using the Holy Bible, Monsieur Marcar produced proofs, evidences and arguments in support of this Cause. Observing that the evidences presented had completely defeated him, with great vehemence and fervour Monsieur Schuler rose and protested, 'I must go home and bring another Bible,' when a Bible was already available at the meeting. When Monsieur Schuler objected so strongly, Monsieur Hambarson, a Christian merchant who, through Āqā Shu'a'llāh – a merchant from Milan, had learned about the Faith in Tiflis [Tbilisi, Georgia], rose and pulled out his pistol to shoot him. However, the Mudabbiru'l-Mamālik quickly seized the pistol and removed it from Monsieur Hambarson's hand. The vociferous protests and complaints of the Christians intensified. The confirmations of Almighty God poured forth, however, and the meeting concluded. Since my residence was near Government House, the governor became thoroughly aware of the details of this incident and raised no objections to the believers.

Because of the priest's inability to respond [to Baha'i arguments] at that gathering, several Christian attendees accepted the truth of this mighty

Cause [i.e. became Baha'is]. Therefore, from then on, each week a number of Christians would attend the Baha'i gatherings and meetings – some held in the home of Āqā 'Alī Arbāb, and some in my residence. The believers at that time were in the utmost safety and security.

Cleric Opposition to the Governor

In the year 1319 AH [1901 CE], the following 'ulamā in Rasht rose up against the just government of Lieutenant-General Nasru's-Saltanih Tunukābunī: Mullā Muhammad [known as] Hājī Khummāmī; Hājī Siyyid Yūsuf Mujtahid; Hājī Mullā Muhammad Sīqlānī; Hājī Āqā Ridā; Mullā Miḥdī Sharīa'tmadār; Hājī Siyyid 'Abdu'llāh; Mullā Muhammad Kadū-Sarā'ī; Mullā Sagharī-Sāzānī; Shaykh Muhammad-'Alī; Hājī Bahru'l-'Ulūm Najafī; Shaykh 'Alī Sīkā-Rudī; Shaykh 'Alī Vayksarā'ī; Mullā Yūsuf Zanbīlī; and some 20 other antagonistic clerics – all outwardly accomplished and spiritually lifeless. They gathered in Chahar-Mahal,²⁵ and for a while planned and connived on ways that would bring about the governor's dismissal from office – thinking that after his dismissal, they would implement their evil plots and injure and harm the innocent and meek friends of God [i.e. the Baha'is].

At that time, because of Governor Nasru's-Saltanih's consideration and support, the Baha'is of Rasht would freely organize gatherings, and with great joy and felicity were engaged in teaching the Cause of God. In fact, in nine neighbourhoods, without any fear or worries and without any dissimulation, they were engaged in service to the Faith. The enemies and ill-wishers learned of these things and reported the details to the concourse of the 'ulamā. In their report they emphasized that several new Baha'i teachers had recently arrived and they included all the specifics and particulars in these reports so that a pretext could be created for causing turmoil. The believers, though, continued their activities with a great deal of pride and without secrecy.²⁶

Baha'i Photographers

Several months passed. During this period a multitude were awaiting turmoil and trouble. It was then that two Baha'is, Āqā Mīrzā 'Alī Khān 'Akkās [‘the photographer’] and Āqā Mīrzā Āqā Khān 'Akkās-Bāshī, arrived in Rasht. After meeting several times with the friends and believers, they started promoting their photographic art in order to advance their business. Each day the Baha'is, being completely enchanted with this novelty, would invite the two newly-arrived believers. These two distinguished photographers, however, carried their intentions to an extreme and suggested that a group photo of the entire Baha'i community be taken. After a few days, this matter was taken to the spiritual assembly, which did not deem it advisable, stating, [‘The conditions in] these days are not conducive to this request, and we must await another time.’

The Picture

However, since God – Sanctified and Exalted be He – always tests His servants, after a few days, and through other means, they secured the assembly's permission. That is, as the day of the declaration of his holiness the Primal Point [i.e. the Bāb], which coincided with the anniversary of 'Abdu'l-Bahā's birth, was approaching, the spiritual assembly granted its consent

for a group picture to be taken on that auspicious day. The honoured Colonel Jahān-Bakhsh Khān, who was the chief-of-staff for the governor, Qāsim Khan, invited all the friends to gather in his house for lunch, where a community photograph would be taken. He was a member of the spiritual assembly, and because of his request it was agreed that on the day of declaration a feast be held in his residence and a photograph be taken that would include a portrait of ‘Abdu’l-Bahā. Afterwards, 12 copies of this picture were to be prepared, and the glass negative was to be kept by the assembly to ensure that prudence was observed.

On the day of the festivities all of the Baha’is gathered, and before lunch, a group picture was taken. Afterwards, everyone had lunch and the gathering was concluded.

After some time, the evil-doers reported this event to the assemblage of the ‘ulamā, which afforded them the pretext [they were looking for]. Each one arose in a different way and manner, with schemes and conspiracies, to harass the friends [i.e. Baha’is] and cause a furore.

Distribution of the Picture

A month after the picture was taken, the two photographers made a copy of the picture and sold that copy to a certain Mashhadī Luft-‘Alī Bandar-Chī Pīrbāzārī. The latter pretended to be a member of the Baha’i community and took the picture, decoratively framed it, and hung it in his house. His shop was located in the Pīrbāzār quarter and as such, he gave written instructions to his carriage-driver to go to his residence and fetch that picture for transference to Pīrbāzār. The carriage-driver did as bidden, but on the way he stopped at the Caravansary Mutasham, where the frame fell from his hand and broke. Several people who were there came over quickly and picked up the picture. They shouted a few obscene words at the carriage-driver and took the picture with them. The carriage-driver returned to Pīrbāzār.

That night, one of the merchants whose office was in the same Caravansary, had a *rawdih-khānī* [‘prayer vigil’] in his house. His name was Āqā Siyyid Ridā Sayf-Sādāt. This Qazvīnī merchant took the picture and hid it. When the *rawdih-khānī* was concluded, the picture remained with him. Several days later, Āqā Sayf-Sādāt consulted with several hostile Twelver Shī’is. Together they went before the concourse of the ‘ulamā and displayed the picture.

Owing to the plans of the assembled ‘ulamā that very picture became a cause for turmoil. [The stage of quiet planning] was from 7 Jamādīu’t-Thānī [11 September 1902 CE] until 11 Dhī’l-Hajjih 1320 AH [11 March 1903 CE]. Their first step was to give the picture to Mīrzā Tāhir, the son of Mustawfī, one of the prominent citizens of Rasht, in order for him to reproduce 50 copies, one for each of the city’s ‘ulamā. In turn, each cleric, of his own accord, was to disperse the picture across the province of Gilan, so that tumult, disturbances and mischief could be precipitated.

Igniting the Protests

In that same year, a certain Mashhadī Taqī Zargar, along with his brother Mashhadī Ridā, who were both goldsmiths, were engaged in their profession. These two were brothers of Āqā Mashhadī Qāsim Zargar, who was mentioned earlier [in these pages]. These two brothers were working in their

shop when a woman, sent there at the instigation of the 'ulamā, came in to purchase some gold jewellery. After the usual discussions, she procured the item, paid and left. When she was leaving, [she looked at the picture frame] and according to instructions that she had been given previously, raised the cry of 'Our religion is lost!'

It is well evident what a mighty clamour resulted. As she cried hysterically, the other shopkeepers in the bazaar rushed into the shop of the two [Baha'is], and with utmost severity and cruelty dealt with those two wronged brothers. At last, they dragged the men to the home of Mullā Muhammad Khummāmī, the renowned Hujjatu'l-Islām. It must be clear what befell the two men, to such an extent that the pen is unable to recount. Moreover, given the background of strong opposition to the governorship of the Nasru's-Saltanih, it must be evident in what manner the 'ulamā of Rasht behaved. The governor, on the other hand, was proud, brave and courageous, though he was not able to change the course of events.

The 'ulamā connived even more, and this time wrote a statement in large letters, pretending that it was from the much wronged Baha'is of Rasht. This letter was addressed to the renowned Hujjatu'l-Islām and contained every manner of insult, offence, obscenity and unseemly accusations. This document was their instrument for further agitation and turmoil.

Shortly afterwards, the governor sent instructions to Āqā Shaykh Mihdī Shari'atmadār to urgently send Āqā Taqī and Āqā Ridā Zargar to Government House. When they arrived there, they were released [from captivity].

A Death and Planned Burial

After the release of those two distinguished men, Ustād Hashim Bannā Qazvīnī, the brother of Dervish Bāqir, who was known as Dervish Mas'ūd, was stricken with paralysis and passed away two days later. In short, day by day, the concourse of the 'ulamā were getting closer to their objective. When Dervish Mas'ūd learned of the death of his brother, Ustād Hashim, he began arrangements for the funeral procession, which would include marching and howling demonstrators, the raising of flags, and the music of drums and trumpets. Ustād Hashim's father-in-law, Siyyid Hasan Baqqāl ['grocer'], who was one of the mischief-makers and ruffians of Rasht, quickly learned about the funeral details and informed several of the troublemakers. Together they went to the home of the Bahru'l-'Ulūm and reported the details. In turn, the Bahru'l-'Ulūm gave every seminary student and ākhund in Rasht instructions that they should impede the funeral.

The governor learned of this plan. He sent several of his farrashes and their chief, the Muntasru'd-Dawlih, to ensure that the deceased would have a proper funeral procession.

Attack on the Baha'is

When this information reached the assemblage of the 'ulamā, they decided to attack and plunder the homes of the Baha'is and massacre them. For this purpose, during the night they hung the letter that they had forged from the Baha'is containing all manner of insults and obscenities heaped upon the Hujjatu'l-Islām, Hājī Khummāmī, at the entrance of the Hujjatu'l-Islām's home.

Mullā Muhammad Hājī Khummāmī himself was not aware of this plan. Early in the morning he came out of his house to find a large placard hung over the entrance, containing insults, abuse and curses, while his other door was covered with filth and refuse. He also was deeply perturbed that several passers-by were standing there loudly reading the letter. Quickly, he [i.e. the Hujjatu'l-Islam] informed the bazaar that the shopkeepers should close their shops and raise the cry, 'Our religion is lost!'²⁷

In light of his responsibilities, the governor moved quickly to restore order throughout the city. He gave instructions for the troops, cavalry and artillery to be stationed around Government House and to quell the insurrection, and also to ensure that no harm came to the wronged believers – perchance God's lambs might be secured from the vicious wolves.

The situation grew intense as the ruffians, hooligans and hoodlums launched their attacks. However, when the 'ulamā saw the guns and artillery and realized that the tumult and uprising would result in their own mortality, they withdrew their hands from bloodshed, mischief and sedition, relinquishing their earlier plans and hopes.

On that day, however, the 'ulamā sent the aforementioned picture to every part of Iran, fomenting all manner of cruelty and brutality. In every town, the fire of incitements and sedition rose high, particularly in Yazd, Nayriz and Isfahan, in such wise that even the field of Karbala had not witnessed such incidents.²⁸ Even foreign governments became aware of the brutality of this tyrannical, bloodthirsty [Shī'i] sect and testified to the meekness of this party [the Baha'is].²⁹

Siyyid Mutivali

There was a certain Āqā Siyyid Husayn, who was from Mazandaran and had been entangled in troubles, and [some time previously] had fled to Rasht. He was in that same photograph mentioned above, seated with great dignity. To observe wisdom, he had enrolled as one of the special attendants of [the Hujjatu'l-Islam] Hājī Khummāmī to the point that he was entrusted with the administration of several religious endowments. Because of this, he was referred to as Āqā Siyyid Husayn Mutivalī ['custodian of endowments'].

Without being aware of earlier events, near noon one day, during the course of the upheavals, he attended the *rawdih-khānī* of the Hujjatu'l-Islam. After the prayer session was concluded, Āqā Hājī Khummāmī instructed one of his attendants, 'Remove Siyyid Mutivalī's turban, beat him over the head, and expel him from the gathering.' After this, the endowments were also removed from his administration. Of a certainty, it must be clear what befell that wronged and debilitated believer, who after a few days left Rasht.³⁰

The Funeral

[To return to the funeral account], after three days and nights, at the insistence of the believers and by instruction of the esteemed governor, the Muntasru'd-Dawliḥ, chief of the farrashes, picked up the remains [of Ustād Hashim]. He sent word to Dervish Mas'ūd, who came with his followers and buried the body of Ustād Hashim near Bagh Shah, at a location known as Khalbāsh-Kallih.³¹

This news reached the 'ulamā. The next morning the 'ulamā and some local thugs marched to Bagh Shah and exhumed the remains of that distinguished man from his grave. They tore him into pieces and set them on fire.

This news reached the governor. Immediately he sent his men to seize the evil-doers, and without trial to punish them appropriately. The instigators were beaten severely with sticks and the thugs had their ears and noses cut off, and, as an admonishment to others, were paraded throughout the city.

Public Uprising

As result of this incident, a public uprising took place. Some rushed to Government House, some went towards the home of the Mudabbiru'l-Mamālik, some towards the home of Mīrzā Ibrāhīm Ibtihāju'l-Mulk and some attacked the home of Āqā 'Alī Arbāb. The roar of 'Our religion is lost!' and 'O Muhammad!' and 'O 'Alī!' filled the entire city. However, they were not able to injure or hurt the believers.³²

For three days this upheaval continued. The Sharī'atmadār, who was a capable and competent man, quickly came to Government House and commenced discussions regarding how to defuse this mighty uproar, which on the one hand was witnessing the attack of hooligans, and on the other, unrest throughout the city.

In short, after three days, it was determined that the way to subdue the uprising was for several of the Baha'is to leave Rasht. It was believed that with their exit, the situation would be calmed. The group [to leave town] was to consist of the Ibtihāju'l-Mulk; the Mudabbiru'l-Mamālik; Hājī Mīrzā Ahmad Qazvīnī; Mīrzā Ibrāhīm Jadīd Siyāh-Kulī; Dervish Mas'ūd; Mīrzā Husayn Khān, the son of Rafī'u'l-Mulk; Colonel Jahān-Bakhsh Khān, the chamberlain of the governor Qāsim Khān; Karbalā'ī 'Abbās 'Allāf; Mashhadī Ridā; Mashhadī Taqī Zargar; Siyyid Husayn Mutivalī; Mīrzā Āqā Sārimu'l-Atibbā; the I'tidhāu'l-Vizari, the chief of the post office; Āqā 'Alī the maternal uncle of his honoured Mīrzā Tarāzu'llāh [Samandarī-Hand of the cause]; and this lowly servant, Yahyā. The Sanctified Lord looked upon Āqā 'Alī Arbāb and his family with the eye of compassion, since there was no mention of them in the discussions.

When the above-named [Baha'is] were about to depart from town, Siyyid Mutivalī, who previously had left town, arrived back in Rasht. The troublemakers learned of his arrival, seized him, removed his turban and placed a paper hat on that wretched soul, and, unclad, threw him out of the house. In the streets and in the bazaar that illustrious man suffered bitterly at the hands of the ungodly, and did not have a moment's rest nor comfort. Eventually, Mīrzā Ibrāhīm Jadīd gave him a room in his house for a few days and protected him.

The troubles in Rasht began to spill over into other towns as well. In Lahijan, Āqā Mashhadī Ghulām-'Alī Tājir ['merchant'] was expelled from his residence and twenty other believers were harassed, tormented and beaten. Even in such places as Siyāh-Kal and, and any other location where the lamp of divine Faith was lit, they tried to extinguish its light.

This news reached the governor. He charged someone to see to the protection and support of the divine friends. However, that wretched soul, who was bereft of the knowledge of God, arrived like a Shīmr³³ in Lahijan and commenced searching for the remainder of the companions of the Prince of Martyrs so he could slay them too.³⁴ That tyrannical and blood-thirsty man, whose name must be preserved for posterity, was the Jalīlu'l-Mamālik. His older brother, Mu'tīn Humāyūn had rendered great services in Shiraz to the friends of God.

Soon the upheavals and tumult reached Port Anzali, which is Iran's largest port. Several Baha'is lived there, including Āqā Mīrzā Āqā Tihirānī, among others. They too were engulfed by the persecution and malefactions of a bloodthirsty people.

It was about this time that it was heard that Hājī Mīrzā Haydar-'Alī had arrived from the Holy Land in Port Anzali, bearing word of glad-tidings and soul-stirring news. The people there, however, attacked the custom house [to injure him], although two or three of the believers were able to protect him. The Hājī enquired from Rasht what he should do to remain safe. In turn, the spiritual assembly contacted the governor and enquired about the means of his protection. The instruction was for Hājī Mīrzā Haydar-'Alī to arrive at one of the friends' homes under the cover of darkness. He was then to be conveyed confidentially to Tehran. In accordance with this plan, Hājī Mīrzā Haydar-'Alī came to Rasht and thence proceeded to Tehran.

Banishment of the Baha'is

In Rasht, after discussions between the concourse of the 'ulamā and the governor, it was decided to exile a number of the friends, whose names were recorded previously, in order to mitigate the uproar and tumult. The governor sent his men in the early morning of 27 Rabī'u'th-Thānī [23 July 1903] to summon those condemned to exile to Government House. This included Mīrzā Ibrāhīm, the Ibtihāju'l-Mulk; Colonel Jahān-Bakhsh Khān; Mīrzā Ibrāhīm Jadīd; Ghulām-'Alī Khān, the Mudabbir [u'l-Mamālīk]; and this humble servant.

When we had arrived at Government House and saw each other, the honoured Ghulām-'Alī Khān, the Mudabbir, commenced to protest with the governor's chief of farrashes. At the urging of Colonel Jahān-Bakhsh Khān, Mīrzā Ibrāhīm and I decided to go before the governor and beseech him to withdraw the order for our exile. However, when we came before the governor and he saw us — particularly the wretched Āqā Mīrzā Ibrāhīm — he shouted, 'Take them outside and beat them with sticks until I come myself!' They took Mīrzā Ibrāhīm, but Colonel Jahān-Bakhsh Khān and I escaped through another door and were deprived of the great bounty of being beaten with sticks!

However, the honoured Mīrzā Ibrāhīm bountifully partook of this grace and while being beaten would cry out, 'Yā Hadrat-i-'Abbās, Yā Hadrat-i-'Abbās!' From another entrance to Government House, I reached him, and at that point they stopped beating him, because in those days I carried some influence and was esteemed by those who worked in Government House; for this reason they decided to abandon any further corporal punishment. They took him to prison instead.

Quickly I left Government House to see what had befallen my friends. A carriage was immediately summoned, and I put on board the Mudabbiru'l-Mamālīk and the Ibtihāju'l-Mulk and conveyed them to the Idarih Rāh-Shoussée [Highway Office], which in those days was leased by Āqā Siyyid Asadu'llāh Barāt-Bāz, who at the time owned the transportation system. I asked for a half-hour reprieve from an officer who had arrived to conduct the men [on their exile] to Tehran, so that a change of clothing could be brought from their residences. They were then sent off to Tehran.³⁵

After this occurrence, the Nimrod-like fire caused by the ‘ulamā, trouble-makers and ruffians was extinguished.

Colonel Nūru’llāh Khān, who was among the staunch and steadfast Baha’is, came to Government House accompanied by ten of his cavalry soldiers, so that they could conduct the exiled men from Rasht to Manjil. Several of the governor’s officers brought a number of the believers to Government House, as they were supposed to be seen by the ‘ulamā before being sent on exile. The governor intended for their exile to commence once they had arrived outside the city limits, but the ‘ulamā insisted they must be conducted through the bazaar[market square], so that everyone would be certain of their fate and therefore would grow quiet. In short, the men who were brought in this manner were Āqā Mīrzā Husayn Khān, the son of the Rafi’u’l-Mulk; Karbalā’ī ‘Abbās ‘Allāf; Mashhadī Ridā Zargar; Mashhadī Taqī Zargar; Āqā Mīrzā Bāqir Dervish, known as Dervish Mas’ūd; Āqā ‘Alī Dā’ī; Āqā Siyyid Husayn Mutivalī; Āqā Ustād ‘Abdu’llāh Qannād; Āqā Mashhadī ‘Alī Qahvih-Chī Isfahānī; and Āqā Mashhadī Husayn Qazvīnī, who had a shop near Khāhar-Imām. These believers attained the honour of service to the Faith by being banished.

The following believers, however, were deprived of this mighty bounty and were not exiled: Mīrzā Ibrāhīm Jadīd Siyāh-Kalī; Colonel Jahān-Bakhsh Khān; Āqā Mīrzā Muhammad-‘Alī Khān Tihirānī, who worked in the telegraph office; the I’tidhā’u’l-Vūzarā; Hājī Mīrzā Ahmad Tājir Qazvīnī; Monsieur Kalus[Carlos];³⁶ Mīrzā Ishaq Khān Kashānī; Āqā Mīrzā Āqā Tabīb, known as the Sāramu’l-Atibbā; and this ephemeral servant. Considering their professional occupations, these individuals were not pursued any further by the governor or by the ‘ulamā.

Continued Harassment of the Baha’is

After these events, it was decided that the Baha’is – both men and women – would not be permitted to use the public baths. Moreover, instead of shaving Baha’i heads, the barbers were cutting their scalps.

In short, two months later, the wretched Siyyid Mutivalī, who had been hiding in various places, came out one day without his turban [the sign of his lineage], for the purpose of earning a living. However, he encountered two of the ‘ulamā, who ruthlessly forced him into their residence. These two were Āqā Siyyid Ismā’īl Mujtahid Rashtī and Āqā Siyyid ‘Abdu’llāh Rashtī, who was related to the Hujjatu’l-Islam. There he was told, ‘Either you must deny and curse [the Baha’i Faith] or we will tear you into pieces.’

This news reached the new governor, the Hakīmu’l-Mulk. [It should be noted that] he had been installed when the Nasru’s-Saltanih, the then governor, was dismissed from his office two months after the upheavals caused by the ‘ulamā.³⁷

I am not sure how Siyyid Mutivalī managed to escape from the two clerics after all his clothes had been torn and he had been stripped of every garment. Nevertheless, he ran into the street and a Muslim – who apparently was not a Muslim but was one of the believers of this mighty Cause – found him and covered him with his own thin, black summer ‘abā and showed him a way to flee.

In the utmost state of wretchedness, injury and fatigue, Siyyid Mutivalī came to the residence of my brother, Āqā Mīrzā Nabī – a home that belonged to a non-Baha’i. It was midnight when they informed me, so I

went and brought him to my own home, where he stayed in secret. Two days later, I took him to his own residence and, after consulting with the friends, a week later he was sent to Badkubih and then to 'Ishqabad.

At that time, Āqā 'Alī Arbāb lived in a caravansary located behind the town's large square. Half of this building belonged to Āqā Siyyid Asadu'llāh, who was [one of the] Sādāt Khams. Although he was a believer, he hid his allegiance and strenuously avoided all the Baha'is of Rasht. One of the rooms in this caravansary was occupied by Āqā 'Alī Arbāb. Several other residents of this caravansary were among the ruffians and agitators, and they sternly told Āqā Siyyid Asadu'llāh, 'You must expel 'Alī Babi from this location.'

That distinguished man obeyed and informed Arbāb that he was to vacate the premises. It must be clear what a strain was placed on him until he left that caravansary. After he had left that location, through the intercessions of Mīrzā Ibrāhīm Jadīd and the Mafākhiru'l-Mulk, he found a room in Sarāy-Kamrāniyyih, which was located behind Government House. This room, however, was so foul that no one could stand even an hour in it. However, even after paying a large sum, this was the only room he could acquire. Āqā 'Alī Arbāb, Āqā Mīrzā Tarāzu'llāh[Samandarī] and Āqā Ghulām-'Alī lived in that room.

There was a few thousand tumans was owed to Āqā 'Alī Arbāb by creditors in Rasht. A few days after he had transferred his residence to the new location, Hājī Khummāmī proclaimed that all who owed money to 'Alī Babi were excused from paying him even the smallest coin, and that this debt was forgiven to everyone, much the same way as a mother's milk is free to the babe. He added that only if Arbāb had a son and the son were a Muslim, then the money would have been owed to the boy. For a long time Arbāb tried to negotiate with those who owed him money, but in the end he was not able to collect even a single coin.

Mention of Āqā Mīrzā Āqā Tabīb, the Sāremu'l-Atibbā, was made earlier. That desolate soul had gone one day to the public bath known as Hammām Hājī Mīrzā Nasīr. He had not started his bath and had not gone into the pool, when this news was taken to Hājī Khummāmī. The Hujjatu'l-Islam sent a gang of his evil-doers, who were his seminary students, to the bath, and they dragged him outside, unclad, wearing only a torn towel. In this way, he was paraded in the streets and bazaar. I saw him when this incident was happening, and by spending a considerable sum was able to win his ransom and save him from the claws of those bloodthirsty wolves.

From the beginning of the tumult on 11 Dhi'l-Hajjih 1320 AH [11 March 1903 CE] until its conclusion was two months. During that period, the wretched, wronged believers were seized by the hands of ferocious tyrants. Each day they were tormented and tortured with a new excuse. Praise be unto God that this wronged community shone brilliantly on the field of trial and emerged steadfast and sincere. Although outwardly the Baha'is of Rasht did not suffer martyrdom, alas, each hour of every day was like drinking from the chalice of self-renunciation. The martyrs of other towns in Iran suffered only once as a martyr; but the believers of Rasht, despite their fewness in number, were to suffer unabated and most bitterly over a long period.

It was three days after the passing of the Hakīmu'l-Mulk, who was the governor of Rasht and had died suddenly from a heart attack, that I bid my friends goodbye and left for Talish.

A Tablet from ‘Abdu’l-Bahā

After these incidents, I have nothing worthy of my readers to present. Therefore, I conclude with the text of a tablet that I received during the course of those upheavals, which I include in these pages of history.

Rasht. The honoured Mīrzā Yahyā Khān, the ‘Amīdu’l-Atibbā, upon him rest the glory of God!

He is God!

O steadfast servant of God! Even though the clouds of tribulation repeatedly poured forth the rains of affliction; the field of suffering was spread; the ensemble of trials was readied; the chalice of persecution was disseminated; and the friends drank their fill and became targets of oppression and cruelty – this servant too was a partner and participant in each of these ordeals, and an inhabitant of a corner of this territory of calamity and difficulties. Do not be sad. Do not grieve. Whatever occurs, of a certainty, it is ordained and appropriate. This is the prerequisite of faithfulness in the love of God. It is decreed and ordained for the friends of God.

Days pass away. Continually every day and night witness new events. All created things are targets of the arrow of destiny and subject to every calamity. It is for this reason that the contingent world is subject to change and revolution, and subordinate to hardship and adversity.

The difference is that all others suffer trials in the path of self-desire, while the divine friends accept the darts of trials in the path of God. The first is futile, while the latter will bear results more precious than pearls and jewels. Therefore, give thanks unto the Lord that in the path of God you have suffered difficulties.

The hope of the faithful is that from His infinite bounties, this hardship will transform into blessings, and this anguish will become the mightiest recompense and the greatest bestowal.

Upon thee be salutations and praise,

‘A. ‘A.³⁸

Colophon

This history of the Cause was written in the city of Rasht on 1 Rabī‘u’l-Avval 1345 AH [9 September 1926 CE], by the least of writers, the ‘Amīdu’l-Atibbā Hamadānī.

Appendix 1

Two Documents on the 1903 Persecutions in Iran

The intensity of the 1903 persecution of the Baha’is throughout Iran resulted in considerable attention and reports by the foreign embassies in Tehran. The Ottoman embassy also reported on this ordeal, and two such reports are cited below through the kindness of Dr Necati Alkan. The original Turkish is cited along with Dr Alkan’s translation.

Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi (Istanbul), Y.PRK.EŞA. (Yıldız Perakende Evrakı: Elçilik, Şehbenderlik ve Ataşemilterlik), No. 43/23

1) Report No. 491 from the Ottoman Embassy in Tehran (Sefaret-i kübrâ-yı Devlet-i Osmaniyye)

Mâbeyn-i Hümâyûn-i Cenâb-ı Mulûkâne-i Başkîtâbet-i celilesine

Devletli efendim hazretleri

İran'da min el-kadim Babi mezhebi aleyhinde teessüs eden münâferet ahîren kesb-i şiddet ederek Reşt'de vefat eden bir şahsı Babi olduğu beyaniyle ahali kabirden çıkararak ihrak bi'l-nâr eyledikleri ve bir takım muteberânın hâne ve dükkanlarını dahi ashâbı Babi olduğu vesilesiyle yağma ve gâret etdikleri hükûmet-i mahalliye tarafından da işbu vak'ada müşevvek olanları mücazaaten kulakları kesilerek vak'anın önü alınabildiği ve Yezd şehrinde dahi muteberân-ı ulemâdan on ikisinin Babi bulundukları iddiasıyla ahali tarafından parça parça edilerek katl ve hâneleri yağma edildiği ve İsfahan'da dahi yirmi kişinin ahali tarafından yine bu vesileyle katl ve itlâf edildikleri ve Tahran'da dahi ... ahalinin bazı tüccar mutebere hânelerine bu vesileyle hücum etmek niyetinde bulunduklarının hükûmetce istihbar edilmesi üzere bir gûna iğtişâş vukûuna meydan bırakmamak üzere şehirde taraf taraf asâkir-i mustahfaza gezdirilmek olduğu ve vilâyet-i sâirenin ekserisinin dahi bu vechle hâl-i iğtişâşda bulunduğu istihbar edilmekle berâ-yı mâlumat arzına mücâseret kılındı ve ol bâbda ve her halde emr ü ferman hazret-i men lehülemrimdir.

11 Rebiülâhîr 321/24 Haziran 319 (7 Temmuz 1903) Tahran maslahatgüzârı, mühür:

[Translation]

To the Imperial Chief Secretary

The longstanding enmity against the Babi sect in Iran has recently gained in its violence. It was reported that a person in Rasht who died and was believed to be a Babi, was taken out of his grave and burned by the people; and that houses and shops, the owners of which are Babis, of some respected people were plundered. The local government stopped the events and punished those involved by cutting off their ears. Twelve respected 'ulamâ in Yazd who were believed to be Babis were cut to pieces by the mob and their houses pillaged. In Isfahan, also, twenty people were slaughtered on these grounds. And it was reported by the government that the ... [cannot read the word] people in Tehran intended to attack the houses of respected merchants, but that soldiers were sent to different places to prevent the tumults; other provinces are also facing tumults.

11 Rabi' II [1]321 (7 July 1903), the charges d'affair in Tehran, seal: Muhammed Bahauddin

2) Report No. 506 from the Ottoman Embassy in Tehran (Sefaret-i kübrâ-yı Devlet-i Osmaniyye)

Mâbeyn-i Hümâyûn-i Cenâb-ı Mulûkâne-i baş kitâbet-i celilesine

Devletli efendim hazretleri

İran'ın bazı vilâyetlerinde Babi mezhebi aleyhinde zuhur edib 24 Haziran 319 (7 Temmuz 1903) tarih ve dört yüz doksan bir numarolu tahrîrât-ı çâkerânemle arz ve işâr kılınan iğtişâşdan Yezd ve İsfahan cihetleri iğtişâşı henüz ber taraf edilemeyerek o cihetle kuvve-i askeriye sevkine mecburiyet hâsıl olduğu Hariciye Nâzırı tarafından ifade edilmiş olmağla li-eceli'l-mâlumat arzına mücâseret kılındı. Ol bâbda ve her halde emr ü fermân Hazret-i men lehülemrimdir.

15 Rebiülâhîr 321/28 Haziran 319, Tahran maslahatgüzârı, mühür: Muhammed Bahauddin

[Translation]

To the Imperial Chief Secretary

Among the tumults (*iġtiṣṣât/iġtishâshât*) in some of the provinces in Iran, owing to the opposition towards the Babi sect that occurred on 24 Haziran [1]329 (7 July 1903), and which was presented in report No. 491 by this servant, the tumults in Yazd and Isfahan could not yet be prevented. The Foreign Minister informed that therefore it was compulsory to send military forces.

15 Rabi' II [1]321 (11 July 1903), the charges d'affair in Tehran, seal: Muhammed Baha'uddin

Appendix 2**'Abdu'l-Bahā's Tablet to the Author**

[At the end of his narrative, the author cited a tablet by 'Abdu'l-Bahā, and for the ease of reference the text of that communication, as given in Makātīb 'Abdu'l-Bahā, vol. 6, 112–13, is provided below. The Translator.]

۱۱۳

رسید بساط محنت گسوده گشت بزم امتحان آراسته شد
جام اقتان دورزد و یاران سرمست آن باده گشتند و
معرض شدند و آلام گردیدند ولی این عبد در هر بلائی
شریک و سهم بود و در زاویه مصائب و رزایا مقیم محزون
مباشید مغموم مگردید هر چه پیش آید البته آن باید و
شاید یعنی از لوازم ثبوت بر محبت الله است و از فرائض
مقدّره براجبّاء الله ایام درگذراست و حوادث لیل و
نهار ممتد و مستمر کائنات کل هدف تیرقضا و مورد
انواع جفا زیرا عالم امکان معرض تغییر و انقلاب است
و لابد از حدوث مشقت و عذاب فرق در اینجا است که
کل در سبیل هوی مغرض بلایند و یاران در راه هدئی
مورد تیرجفا آن بی ثمر است و این نتایجش مانند درو
گهر پس شکر کن خدا را که در سبیل هدئی مورد جفا
گشتی و از فضل بیمنتهی امید اهل وفا چنانست که
این بلا سبب عطا شود و این محنت وسیله محنت کبری
و موهبت عظمی شود و عليك التّبة والثناء ع

۱۱۲

زلف مشکبار آراذه لامکان زحمت و مشقتی که در سبیل
جانان کشیدی همیشه در خاطر این آوارگانست و سبب
تقرب درگاه یزدان نفسی که در سبیل آن دلبر آفاق
صدمه و بلا نکشد در خسران و زیانست و مبتلا بزاویه
نسیان و هیزر گواری که مانند جام سرشار از باده بلا
لبریز است پر روح و ربّحان و محرم خلوتگاه یزدان
پس ای یار مهربان از مشقت و بلائی که کشیدی شادمان
باش و شکرانه نما زیرا محتمل این بلا یا مانند بدتر افتاست
و برکت خومن محقق و مقور امة الله رقیه سلطان را
تحت برسان و همچنین امة الله قمر سلطان را و همچنین
آقا جلال را از الطاف بی پایان حضرت رحمن امیدوارم
که مشمول الطاف گردند و منظور بعین عنایت حضرت
رحمن و علی الكل التّبة والثناء الى الابد الابان ع
هو الله
ای بنده ثابت حق هر چند از غم بلا باران جفا پی در پی

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Contributor details

Dr Ahang Rabbani has published numerous scholarly articles, essays, books and translations over the course of several decades including regular valued contributions for the *Baha'i Studies Review*. A major book that he translated, *The Genesis of the Bābi-Baha'i Faiths in Shīrāz and Fārs* was published by Brill in 2008. Dr Rabbani passed away in 2013.

Contact: Adel Shafipour adelshog@gmail.com in respect of the article.

Ahang Rabbani has asserted his right under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act, 1988, to be identified as the author of this work in the format that was submitted to Intellect Ltd.

Endnotes

1. A debt of gratitude is owed to Prof Juan R. Cole, who in the mid 1990s graciously shared with me a copy of this important manuscript, which he had located in the Afnan Library in England. This manuscript has since been digitally published on H-Bahai at: <http://www.h-net.msu.edu/~bahai/arabic/vol5/rasht/rasht.htm>. I am also indebted to Phillip Tussing who with great care read through the manuscript and offered a number of suggestions for its improvement, and to Sen McGlinn and Dr Moojan Momen for several important comments. I am grateful to Dr Necati Alkan for the two important documents cited in Appendix 1. All errors and shortcomings, however, are mine.
2. Three other documents are known to the translator: 1. Memoir of Mīrzā Mihdi Tabīb. In his seminal work, Hasan Balyuzi refers to this memoir: 'In Rasht, Samandar spent most of his time meeting enquirers in the home of a physician, Mīrzā Mihdi Khān. This zealous Baha'i, a native of Hamadan of Jewish background, has written an absorbing autobiography, which unfortunately has not seen the light of day.' 2. *Tārīkh Zuhūru'l-Haqq*, vol. 6, pp. 923–74. This section covers the introduction of the Faith in Gilan province and has considerable biographical information on the early Baha'is of Rasht. 3. *Tārīkh Zuhūru'l-Haqq*, vol. 8, part 2, pp. 757–99. This account deals with the Baha'i community of Gilan in general, and of Rasht to a great extent, during 'Abdu'l-Baha's ministry.
3. Mīrzā Asadu'llāh Fādil Māzandarānī, *Tārīkh Zuhūru'l-Haqq*, vols. 1–9, digital facsimile, East Lansing, MI: H-Bahai, 1998–1999. <http://www.h-net.org/~bahai/index/diglib/mazandani.htm> Māzandarānī, 6: 992.
4. Māzandarānī, *Tārīkh Zuhūru'l-Haqq* 8: 757.
5. Māzandarānī, *Tārīkh Zuhūru'l-Haqq* 6: 923.
6. Hasan M. Balyuzi, *Eminent Bahá'ís in the Time of Bahá'u'lláh: With Some Historical Background*, Oxford: George Ronald, 1985, 62–4.
7. Māzandarānī, *Tārīkh Zuhūru'l-Haqq* 6: 928.
8. Māzandarānī, *Tārīkh Zuhūru'l-Haqq* 6: 923, notes that the newly-converted Mullā Muhammad was 70 years old. In 1295 AH [1878 CE], when the laws of the obligatory prayers had not been promulgated, he inquired of his religious duties. He was given a collection of prayers that he was to recite each day after reciting 'Allāh'u'Abhā' 95 times.
9. The five brothers, known as Sādāt Khams – a title bestowed by Baha'u'llah – were merchants and had obtained Russian citizenship with the surname Baqiroff. Two of the brothers were able to negotiate a contract with the holder of the Imperial concession for the paved road between Anzali and Tehran for the provision of traveller's services along the route – rest-houses, food, accommodation and other necessities. Because of this, they became very rich. After their conversion, they were to render important services to the Faith of Baha'u'llah, particularly Siyyid Nasru'llāh who lived in Tehran and covered the majority of the expenses of 'Abdu'l-Baha's travels in Europe and America. Siyyid Ahmad, son of one of these brothers, travelled to Europe, attended 'Abdu'l-Baha in Paris and travelled with him in 1913 when he visited Stuttgart, Budapest and Vienna. For more details see Ruhu'llāh Mihrabkhani. *Khandān Sadāt-i Khams*; Germany: 'Asr-i Jadid, 1994.
10. Māzandarānī, *Tārīkh Zuhūru'l-Haqq* 6: 928.
11. Ibid. 6: 928–30; and Balyuzi, *Eminent Bahá'ís in the Time of Bahá'u'lláh* 69–72.

12. In the present rendering, subheadings, footnotes and clarifying comments in square brackets have been added.
13. Assuming that by ‘‘A 1’’ the author means Rabī‘u’l-Avval, then according to calendars available to the present translator, 22 Rabī‘u’l-Avval 1307 AH was on a Saturday.
14. Early Iranian Baha’is often continued to identify themselves by their former religions, so by this statement the author means he is a Baha’i of Jewish descent.
15. He is the recipient of an important tablet from Baha’u’llah known as Lawh Ittihad; text in Baha’u’llah, *Ad’iyyah Hadrat Mahbub*, Germany: Bahá’í Verlag, 1980, 388–406.
16. Balyuzi notes, Samandar ‘was in Rasht for three months, and held a special class to teach the *Bayán*’, *Eminent Bahá’is in the Time of Bahá’u’lláh* 212.
17. Tabīb and Hakīm are interchangeable, meaning a physician.
18. Hājī Nasīr was first a Bābī and fought at the battle of Shaykh Tabarsi. He went on to render important services, and his martyrdom is lamented by Baha’u’llah: ‘Previous to these forty years controversies and conflicts continually prevailed and agitated the servants of God. But since then, aided by the hosts of wisdom, of utterance, of exhortations and understanding, they have all seized and taken fast hold of the firm cord of patience and of the shining hem of fortitude, in such wise that this wronged people endured steadfastly whatever befell them, and committed everything unto God, and this notwithstanding that in Māzandarān and at Rasht a great many have been most hideously tormented. Among them was his honor, Hājī Nasīr, who, unquestionably, was a brilliant light that shone forth above the horizon of resignation. After he had suffered martyrdom, they plucked out his eyes and cut off his nose, and inflicted on him such indignities that strangers wept and lamented, and secretly raised funds to support his wife and children.’ Bahá’u’llāh, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, trans. Shoghi Effendi, 3rd ed. Wilmette: Bahá’í Publishing Trust, 1988, 71–72. Hājī Nasīr’s fascinating memories are available in *Witness to Shaykh Tabarsi: The Narrative of Hājī Nasīr Qazvīnī*, Witnesses to Bābī and Bahá’í History, vol. 10, eBook, 2007.
19. Lit. the Spirit of God.
20. Massāh may not be a correct reading by the present translator.
21. With the development of transportation infrastructure in Russian territory, the ship from Rasht to Baku became a common route for Baha’i pilgrims to ‘Akkā. Often prominent Baha’i figures travelled through Rasht, and would stay there for some time.
22. Literally, martyr son of martyr. Mullā Muqaddas Khurasanī was granted the station of martyr, as was his son, without either one dying a martyr’s death.
23. Muhammad-Valī Khān Tunukābunī, the Nasru’s-Saltanih (who later received titles of Sepahdar A’zam and Sepahsalar A’zam), was a native of Tunukabun in province of Mazandaran. For some time he was the governor of Tunukabun and in 1885 became a brigadier-general. He received the title the Nasru’s-Saltanih in 1887. After several other posts, he became governor of Rasht in 1899, a post that he held for four years and four months until his dismissal. He later achieved prominence as a leader of the Constitutional Movement. In February 1909, he was the leader of the Nationalist forces, as they took the town of Rasht. He headed the march on Tehran, entering it in July 1909 and thus forcing Muhammad-‘Alī Shah’s abdication. In the new regime, he served several times as prime minister until his death in January 1926 in Tehran. The French diplomat A. L. M. Nicolas reports that in his meeting with him in 1912, the Nasru’s-Saltanih was very sympathetic to the Bāb’s movement; (Moojan Momen, *The Bābī and Bahá’í Religions, 1844–1944: Some Contemporary Western Accounts*. Oxford: George Ronald, 1981, 534). The Nasru’s-Saltanih met ‘Abdu’l-Bahā in 1913 in Paris. At same year, he met Laura Clifford Barney (1879–1974) at Paris and been introduced to Baha’i Faith by her. While reading *Some Answered to Questions of Abdul-Baha*, left a monument account as eye witness to Martyrdom of Badi and Badi been tortured. He wrote the first-hand account at margin of that book. Now, that document kept at B.W.C.
24. The original term, *hikmat*, is often translated as wisdom. In context of many primary historical source documents of the Bābī and early Bahá’í period it refers to dissimulation of one’s faith as means of self-preservation.
25. Literally, four neighbourhoods. The present translator is uncertain whether it refers to a specific location or four different neighbourhoods in Rasht.
26. The author refers to *bī hikmatī* which literally means ‘lack of wisdom’, but in this context the phrase is understood by the translator to mean lack of secrecy in holding Baha’i gatherings.

27. According to Momen, *The Bábí and Bahá'í Religions*, 375–6, on 16 May 1903, Alfred Churchill sent a dispatch in the care of Major Archibald Douglas, who was the military attaché to Tehran Legation, to Sir Arthur Hardinge (Churchill to Hardinge No. 28, 16 May 1903: FO 248 792):

I am taking advantage of the departure of Major Douglas to communicate to your Excellency the latest news respecting the Babi agitation, which is if anything more acute, owing to an obscure placard discovered this morning on the door of the Mujtehed Haji Hummami.

This placard, purporting to have been written by a Babi, heaped the foulest abuse on Haji Hummami and his female relatives. The Ulema were held up to contempt for being powerless and Syed Assadullah, the head of the Transport Company, the Ferrash Bashi and Haji Mirza Mohamed Arbabi were praised as being the high protectors of Babis and members of the glorious community.

It requires little perspicacity to recognise that the offending document was not composed by a Babi but by some evil-disposed person anxious to cause trouble. The Mollahs however insist that it was the work of the Babis and a meeting took place in the house of Haji Hummami this morning.

The wildest rumours are current throughout the town. The latest information I have is that two of the principal Babis were called to Government House this afternoon and that a Jew who has in turn been Mussulman, Babi and then Mussulman again was sticked this afternoon by order of the Nasres Saltaneh in connection with the placard incident. This shows that the Nasres Saltaneh's hand has been forced to a certain extent but it is difficult to obtain reliable information.

Some days ago a dervish was arrested for reviling Babis in the Bazaars. The Governor General caused his head to be shaved and expelled him from the town. This gives rise to much talk to the effect that dervishes singing in praise of Ali and true-believers who dig up the corpse of a renegade Mussulman are sticked, shaved and have their ears cut off.

I am told that a telegraphic petition complaining of the conduct of the Governor General has been sent to Menjil for despatch to Tehran from the Telegraph office there.

I will not fail to communicate to your Excellency any further occurrences which may take place.

28. Karbala is the scene of the martyrdom of Imam Husayn and his companions and marks one of the most significant events in the entire history of Shi'ism.
29. In the summer of 1903, a widespread persecution of Baha'is in Isfahan led to a pogrom of Baha'is in Yazd and surrounding towns. By September, 'Abdu'l-Baha had written a long treatise detailing the occurrences and had a copy translated into English and published in the West, which resulted in many Americans and Europeans becoming aware of the intense persecution of Baha'is in Iran. For a history of this incident (and a new translation of this watershed document), see, Ahang Rabbani, "Abdu'l-Baha's Proclamation on the Persecution of Baha'is in 1903", *Baha'i Studies Review*: 14, 53–67, 2007. <http://www.ingenta-connect.com/content/intellect/bsr/2007/00000014/00000001/art00004>.
30. According to Momen, *The Bábí and Bahá'í Religions* 373–4, the British consul at Rasht, Alfred Churchill, reported on these episodes in a dispatch dated 8 May 1903 to Sir Arthur Hardinge, the British minister at Tehran (Churchill to Hardinge, No. 22, 8 May 1903: FO 248 792).

I have the honour to report that a disturbance took place on Sunday last, the 3rd instant, between a Babi jeweller and some Mussulmans.

The indirect cause of this disturbance was a photograph of a section of the Rasht Babi community which through the bad faith of a photographer has been circulating throughout the town. Two individuals passing by the jeweller's shop in the Bazaar made some jocular remarks in regard to this photograph, whereupon the owner of the shop is reported to have roared out that he was a Babi and would allow no one to insult his religion.

This resulted in a dispute followed by a general melee in which students from a neighbouring college took part. No great harm, however, appears to have been done, the combatants, Gileks[peasants of Gilan] inordinately afflicted with cacoethes loquendi, [a mania for speech] having no doubt exhausted themselves during the preliminary clamour.

The Governor General sent for the Babi and his brother and detained them until the next day in order to keep them out of harm's way. On Monday the jeweller opened his shop and has not been molested in any way since.

A copy of the photograph found its way into the hands of Haji Hummami, one of the principal and perhaps the most learned of the Resht Ulema, who was astounded to see that a Syed, [footnote this that it is Siyyid Husayn Mutivali] his trusted henchman and Mutevalli [custodian] of a Saint's tomb near Sangar, was one of the group of Babis. The Syed had timely warning and has prudently kept out of the way of the Mujtehed who threatens to beat him severely. I am told that the Haji and others of the Ulema have decreed that the Syed and other Babis must divorce their Mussulman wives but that the Nasres Saltaneh has intimated to them that no interference will be allowed as it is the desire of H. M. the Shah that religion should be free. I am also told that the Nasres Saltaneh has sent for a further detachment of one hundred soldiers who are to come from Kasvin and I may mention that since last Sunday the small force stationed at Resht has been served with ball cartridges.

There has been some talk on the part of the Mollahs of boycotting the Babis, who it was proposed, should not be allowed to enter the public baths but I trust that the firm and sympathetic attitude of the Governor General will prevent the execution of any plans which the Mollahs may have formed with the object of creating disturbance at the expense of the community at Resht.

I am informed that the Babis here amount to about one thousand persons of both sexes including at least one Greek and some Armenians.

31. According to Momen, *The Bábi and Bahá'í Religions*, pp. 374–5, on 10 May 1903, Alfred Churchill dispatched the following report (Churchill to Hardinge No. 24, 10 May 1903: FO 248 792):

With reference to my despatch No. 22 of the 8th instant, I have the honour to report a further incident created by the demise of a Babi mason yesterday.

The relatives proposed the customary obsequies according to Mussulman rites but the arrival of the usual paraphernalia in the shape of bier and wooden sweetmeat trays caused some excitement in the neighbourhood which speedily resulted in the gathering of a large mob from all parts of the town.

A disturbance being feared, the Governor General requested the Shariat Madar to arrange matters. The Mujtehed did so in a very commendable manner as, although the crowd remained in the vicinity of the house during the whole of the day, no breach of the peace occurred.

During the night the corpse was secretly taken in the direction of the Boosar Toll Station by some soldiers, farrashes and two servants of the Shariat Madar, who dug a grave and interred the body.

Nothing further of importance has occurred but there can be no doubt that the people are excited. My Russian colleague is of opinion that the rise of prices has to a great extent irritated the lower classes and points out the recent disturbances at Meshed due to the same cause.

It is certain that the dearth of the common necessities of life is much felt at Resht and, with your Excellency's permission, I will on a future occasion revert to the question.

32. According to Momen, *The Bábi and Bahá'í Religions* 374–5, on 15 May 1903, Alfred Churchill reported (Churchill to Hardinge No. 26, 15 May 1903: FO 248 792):

With reference to my despatch No. 24 dated the 10th instant, I have the honour to further report that a number of malefactors exhumed and mutilated the body of the Babi mason, which they subsequently proceeded to burn with naphtha.

For this outrage many arrests were made and two rogues lost an auricle apiece besides being sticked. The executioner was also bastinadoed for being implicated as were likewise the other persons who had been arrested.

A servant of the Mujtehed Haji Hummami was arrested in connection with this outrage and was, I understand, well sticked but he was released in consequence of the threatening proceedings of the Haji in his mosque. The Mujtehed stopped the 'Rozeh' which was being held and sent for the religious students for the purpose, it is said, of releasing his servant by force.

The release of this man, however, smoothed matters over for the time being but I fear that at the present juncture it will require little to cause an explosion if the Mollahs do not keep quiet.

It is generally suspected that the Nasres Saltaneh is himself a Babi. Whether this is the case or not there can be no doubt that he is helping them in every way.

33. Shimir was the persecutor of Imam Husayn on the field of Karbala.
34. Meaning the officer in charge of protecting the Baha'i community instead turned into its persecutor.
35. Momen, *The Bábí and Bahá'í Religions* 376, records that on 19 May, Alfred Churchill reported [Churchill to Hardinge No. 29, 19 May 1903: FO 248 792]:

In continuation of my despatch No. 28 of the 16th instant, I have the honour to report that the Vezir Nizam, who arrived from Europe last week, has not yet left for Tehran having been instructed to remain at Resht to cooperate with the Governor General so long as the agitation against the Babis continues.

Two prominent Babis, the Ebtehaj ol Mulk and the Mudabber el Memalek, left Resht on the 17th instant and matters have since taken a more favourable aspect giving rise to the hope that the agitation will gradually subside before more harm results.

The best remedy would be a heavy fall of rain which would be of great benefit to the crops and would at the same time prevent people gathering at the numerous rozeh khanehs and taziehs which are being held in all parts of the town as is customary here.

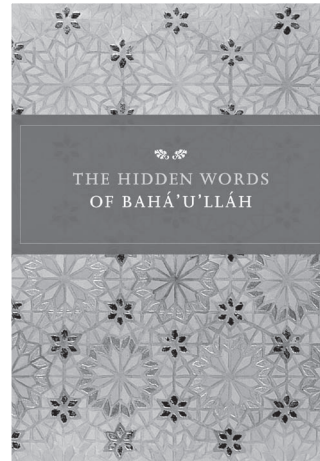
36. The present translator is uncertain of the correct spelling.
37. According to Momen, *The Bábí and Bahá'í Religions* 376, 'the agitation died away gradually, but the courage and efficiency of Nasru's-Saltanih was not rewarded. Indeed a short while later he was removed from his Governorship and left Rasht on 1 June 1903,' (reference is made to correspondence between the British consul in Rasht, Alfred Churchill to Sir Arthur Hardinge No. 31, 6 June 1903: FO 248 792).
38. The present translator is grateful to Adel Shafipour for bringing to his attention that this tablet also appeared in 'Abdu'l-Bahā, *Makātīb 'Abdu'l-Bahá*; vol. 6, Tehran: Mu'assasih Milli Matbū'āt Amrī, 133 BE [1976 CE], 112–13. For ease of reference, that text is provided in Appendix 2. The current rendering has benefited from a draft translation posted by Dr Khazeh Fananapazir on the Tarjuman Internet discussion group on 18 February 2007.

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Reviews

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***Gnostic Apocalypse and Islam: Qur'an, Exegesis, Messianism, and the Literary Origins of the Babi Religion.* Todd Lawson.¹ (2011)**

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Reviewed by **Christopher Buck**, Pennsylvania State University

Email: BuckPhD@gmail.com

Structure and Overview

The spirit is willing, but the text is deep. To plumb its depths, an extended review of *Gnostic Apocalypse and Islam* is needed to explore Todd Lawson's analysis of the early work of Sayyid 'Alī-Muḥammad Shīrāzī (1819–50), known as the Bab ('the Gate'), prophet-founder of the Babi religion (which later evolved into the Baha'i Faith). According to Lawson, the Bab's 'first public heretical act was to compose/reveal a new Qur'an – "the true Qur'an"' (21), which is the Tafsīr Sūrat Yūsuf ('Commentary on the Sura of Joseph') – also known as the Qayyūm al-Asmā' (10) and the Aḥsan al-Qiṣaṣ ('Best of Stories'), the name that the Qur'an itself gives to the Sura of Joseph (Q. 12:3). This 'public heretical act' – and others – was as brazen as it was brilliant, and ultimately cost the Bab his life, with his public execution on 9 July 1850 in Tabriz, Persia (Iran). The Tafsīr Sūrat Yūsuf, composed/revealed in 40 consecutive days (29) in mid-1844, when the Bab was 25 years old (28), is thus the subject matter of Lawson's monograph.

The full title, *Gnostic Apocalypse and Islam: Qur'an, Exegesis, Messianism, and the Literary Origins of the Babi Religion*, packs – that is, compacts – a great deal of conceptual and theological agenda in a few words. Transforming the title into a thesis statement, the following claim – using all of the words (in italics) of the title itself – may be made in representing the 'message' of Lawson's work:

The literary origins of the Babi Religion begin with a Gnostic Apocalypse, the Tafsīr Sūrat Yūsuf, an exegesis of the Qur'an that proclaims the messianic fulfillment of Islam.

In essence, *Gnostic Apocalypse and Islam* could be equivalently entitled, *The Tafsīr Sūrat Yūsuf and the Qur'an*. The Tafsīr Sūrat Yūsuf is composed 'entirely in Arabic' (17) and comprises around 400 pages, with around 4,662 verses (= 111 x 42). The Qur'an itself has 114 suras and 6,200 verses. Whether one of the reasons the Bab chose Sura 12 was that its verses closely number the suras of the Qur'an is uncertain, although undoubtedly the effect of this coincidence was not lost upon the audience of readers (41).

Structurally, *Gnostic Apocalypse and Islam* is laid out as follows: 'Acknowledgments' (vi–vii); 'Introduction: Qur'an, apocalypse, and gnosis' (1–20); '1. Commentary and imitation: Charismatic text, messianic exegesis' (21–45); '2. Voices of the text: Remembrance and gate' (46–74); '3. Renewal of covenant: *Coincidentia oppositorum* and the primal point' (75–92); '4. The metaleptic Joseph: The shirt, the Bees, and Gnostic Apocalypse' (93–139); 'Conclusion: Hermeneutic Spiral' (140–1); 'Appendix 1: Manuscript of Sūrat al Nahḥ' (142–4); 'Appendix 2: Sūrat al Nahḥ transcription' (145–9); 'Notes' (150–84); and 'Bibliography' (185–205); 'General Index' (206–28); and 'Index of Qur'anic verses' (229–30).

Both concept and title – is borrowed, an acknowledged debt. As a 'production' note, Lawson's *Gnostic Apocalypse and Islam* has a strikingly similar colour scheme (blue, black and white) as the cover of Cyril O'Regan's *Gnostic Apocalypse: Jacob Boehme's Haunted Narrative*.² While this is fortuitous, yet it is happily coincidental, as Lawson, in defining the term 'Gnostic Apocalypse' intentionally invokes O'Regan's monograph (3).

By 'Gnostic Apocalypse', Lawson argues that the Tafsīr Sūrat Yūsuf is 'itself the result of a reordering of the basic elements of the scripture of Islam [the Qur'an] that have been internalized and transformed by the apparently opposite processes of imitation and inspiration to become finally an original "act" of literature of a genre that we would like to call gnostic apocalypse' (141). By means of its 'special charismatic energy' (141) and the torquing of central aspects of Shi'i Islam, the Bab endeavoured 'to appropriate and participate in the spiritual power (or charisma) of the Qur'an in order to invoke his own spiritual authority – namely by recasting the existing revelation in a new form' (48).

How does the Bab achieve this? It is through 'metalepsis and paraphrase' (140). Metalepsis is the key to the Bab's literary calculus, by which the Bab interprets the Qur'an in transumptive style, by paraphrase and intertextual echoes, thereby creating a 'the "True Qur'an", and a new Qur'an' (22). The 'True Qur'an', according to Shi'i Islamic tradition, 'has been in the safe-keeping of the Twelfth Imam, due to be restored to its proper place at the time of the return (*raj'a*) on or before the Day of Judgment, when justice is to be reestablished in the world' (4). Thus the Tafsīr Sūrat Yūsuf is the new and true Qur'an revealed by the Twelfth Imam in the apocalyptic moment of realized eschatology, known only by gnosis.

What is metalepsis? The *Oxford English Dictionary*³ defines 'metalepsis' as: 'The rhetorical figure consisting in the metonymical substitution of one word for another which is itself a metonym; (more generally) any metaphorical usage resulting from a series or succession of figurative substitutions. Also: an instance of this.' Technically, metalepsis (or *transumptio*, in its Latin form) is 'double metonymy'. A metonymy (Greek, 'change of name' [noun]), is 'a figure [of speech] by which one name or noun is used instead of another,' and is 'not founded on resemblance, but on *relation*.'⁴ In the very next section, Bullinger defines 'metalepsis', or 'double metonymy', as consisting of 'two stages, only one of which is expressed'.⁵ The Romans called this figure of speech a *transumptio* ('taking across'), i.e. 'transumption'.⁶ The most well-known biblical instance of metalepsis is the expression, 'the blood of Christ', as Ethelbert Bullinger explains:

In the New Testament, the expression ‘the blood of Christ’ is the figure *Metalepsis*; because first the ‘blood’ is put (by *Synecdoche*) from blood-shedding: i.e., the death of Christ, as distinct from His life; and then His death is put for the perfect satisfaction made by it, for all the merits of the atonement effected by it: i.e., it means not merely the actual blood corpuscles, neither does it mean His death as an act, but the merits of the atonement effected by it and associated with it.⁷

Lawson does not explicitly define metalepsis, but refers the reader to O'Regan.⁸ In a 2001 monograph, O'Regan characterizes metalepsis ‘as essentially consisting of disfiguration-refiguration of biblical narrative’.⁹ Thus metalepsis operates as a ‘revisionary ratio, the way in which a later discourse both neutralizes an earlier discourse and siphons off its authority’ – in other words, a form of ‘usurpation’.¹⁰

What does metalepsis look like? How did the Bab make use of this device, this literary technique? It is through a process that may be called ‘inverse exegesis’, resulting in ‘interpretation as instantiation’. Here, the Bab ‘usurps’ (or ‘appropriates’ or ‘fulfils’) the charismatic power and authority of the Qur’an as his own messianic prerogative. In the Tafsīr Sūrat Yūsuf, the Bab ‘disfigures’ the Qur’anic narrative of the Sura of Joseph and ‘refigures’ the figure of Joseph as an archetypal, prophetic figure who typologically prefigures the messianic advent of the Bab himself (as the Shi’i messiah, known as the Mahdi, Qa’im, or return of the Twelfth Imam). Thus the Bab, Lawson concludes, is the new, ‘metaleptic Joseph’ (93–139), that is, Joseph *redivivus*.

Interpretation as Instantiation: Inverse Exegesis?

Exegesis is interpretation – typically of scripture. After reading Todd Lawson’s closely-argued *Gnostic Apocalypse and Islam*, the present writer was left with the distinct impression that the Tafsīr Sūrat Yūsuf, the Bab’s first major revelatory work, was a ‘*tafsīr*’ (Qur’an commentary) in name only, as no ‘formal’ interpretation is found in the chapter translated by Lawson, the Sura of the Bees (chapter 4), which is Sura 93 (*Sūrat al-Nahl*) of the Tafsīr Sūrat Yūsuf. This is in stark contrast to an earlier work of the Bab’s, the Tafsīr Sūrat al-Baqara (‘Commentary on the Sura of the Cow’), an exegesis of the first and second chapters of the Qur’an (2), completed in January to February 1844. Thus the Tafsīr Sūrat Yūsuf is the first work composed subsequent to the inception of the Bab’s prophetic career.

The Tafsīr Sūrat Yūsuf purports to be a commentary on the ‘Sura of Joseph’, which is Sura 12 of the Qur’an. Yet this commentary does not formally ‘explain’ the verses in question, but uses the Qur’anic text as a foil, or template, for presenting something quite different. To be fair, the Bab, as Lawson puts it, ‘had been commanded to write his *tafsīr* by none other than the Hidden Imam’ (23). This fact had earlier been noted by Edward Granville Browne: ‘In it [the Tafsīr Sūrat Yūsuf] a distinct claim to a divine mission is put forward.’¹¹ This is exemplified in Browne’s translation of the following passage from the Sūrat al-Mulk:

God hath decreed that this book, in explanation of the ‘best of stories’ (i.e. the *Sūra-i-Yūsuf*, which is so called) should come forth from Muhammad, son

of Hasan, son of ‘Alí, son of Músa, son of Ja‘far, son of Muḥammad, son of ‘Alí, son of Huseyn, son of ‘Alí, son of Abú Tálíb, unto his servant that it may be the proof of God on the part of the Remembrance [the Bab] reaching the two worlds.¹²

Here, ‘God hath decreed’ – through the agency of the Hidden Imam – that the Bab reveal the Tafsīr Sūrat Yūsuf. This revelation therefore constitutes ‘proof’ of the Bab’s prophetic credentials.

So it is not the ‘fact’ of interpretation that is in question, but the ‘how’. How does this interpretation-as-proclamation work? First, the the Tafsīr Sūrat Yūsuf is a Qur’anic commentary in neo-Qur’anic form. The Bab typically quotes the Qur’anic text (but without using quotes or indicating the he is quoting) and then inserts his own comments – both of which combine to read as though the entire passage was the (imitative) voice of the Qur’an itself. To discern Qur’anic passages from the Bab’s neo-Qur’anic glosses, in fact, one must be able to recognize the Qur’anic text within the Bab’s discourse itself, because where each quotation begins and ends is not immediately obvious. This is where Lawson’s technique of representing the Qur’anic text in small capital letters enables the reader to immediately distinguish the Bab’s ‘commentary’ from the text being commented on. The first eight verses of the ‘Sura of the Bees’ (Sūrat al-Naḥl, Sura 93 of Tafsīr Sūrat Yūsuf) offer a prime example of the Bab’s embellished Qur’anic paraphrasing:

1. IN THE NAME OF GOD, THE MERCIFUL, THE COMPASSIONATE.
2. GO, TAKE THIS SHIRT OF MINE AND DO THOU CAST IT ON MY FATHER’S FACE, AND HE SHALL RECOVER HIS SIGHT; THEN BRING ME YOUR FAMILY ALTOGETHER. (Qur’an 12:93).
3. *kāf hā’ ‘ayn.*
4. Indeed we REVEALED UNTO THE BEES, SAYING: TAKE FROM THE MOUNTAINS (Qur’an 16:68) which are citadels – the abode for affirming the sanctity of God – the sign of this Luminous One, AND OF TREES (Qur’an 16:68), places for affirming that there is no God but God (*al-tawḥīd*), the sign of this Easterner AND OF WHAT THEY ARE BUILDING (Qur’an 16:68) in the path of affirming the unity of God (*al-tawḥīd*), the threadbare garment of this Westerner belonging to God, the Sublime. And He is God, Witness over all things.
5. THEN EAT OF ALL MANNER OF (Qur’an 16:69) divine allusions (*al-ishārāt*) MADE SMOOTH (Qur’an 16:69) in the path of the Remembrance, this Gate. THERE COMES FORTH FROM THEIR BELLIES (Qur’an 16:69) the water of the elixir that is one in terms of its blessings, although it is OF DIVERSE HUES WHEREIN IS HEALING FOR (Qur’an 16:69) believers. Verily God is Powerful over all things.
6. God is the creator of everything through His power. And God, in very truth, is apprised of everything which men do.
7. O believers! FEAR GOD CONCERNING THIS most great word protected in the divine fire. Indeed he is, in very truth, accounted by God, the Sublime, as a witness.
8. O people of the veils! Harken to the call of God from the tongue of the most great Remembrance: VERILY VERILY I AM GOD (Qur’an 28:30) THERE IS NO GOD BUT HIM (Qur’an *passim*). Indeed, the likeness of the Remembrance is as gold softened in fire that flows in rivulets through all the hidden places by the will of God, the High. And he is God – Mighty, Ancient. (100–10)

Here, with the exception of verse 2 and its reference to all Joseph's 'shirt', the 'commentary' is squarely on the 'Sura of the Bees' (Sura 16), rather than the 'Sura of Joseph' (Sura 12) – unless one is prepared to argue that the Bab is somehow explicating verse 93 of Sura 12 by the verses of Sura 16. This would largely explain why the Bab titled his own sura, the 'Sura of the Bees'.

Here, the Bab represents himself as Joseph in verse 4 ('the threadbare garment of this Westerner'). In verse 5, the honey is explicated as 'divine allusions' to 'the Remembrance, this Gate' (i.e. the Bab). Then, in verse 8, the 'gold softened' (*al-dhahab al-mā'ila*) appears to be a double metaphor within the formal 'similitude' (i.e. simile). Here, the Bab's revelation is, at once, compared to both (golden) honey (implicit) and (molten) gold (explicit), conveying the sense that the new revelation is both mellifluous and precious, sweet and rich. Lawson notes that, in verse 8, 'VERILY VERILY I AM GOD' is an implicit claim to divine prerogative and authority: 'It affirms that the Bāb is claiming revelation by comparing his rank to that of Moses' (112). In other words, this 'tafsīr' is no less than 'the call of God from the tongue of the most great Remembrance' – that is, the Bab's new Qur'an, cast in the form of a Qur'an commentary.

As represented by this example, the reader can see that there is neither formal interpretation being performed here with respect to the Qur'an itself, nor of its 'authorial intent', apart from pointing to the Bab as the new Joseph, the new Moses, the revealer of a new Qur'an, and the new voice of God. Where, then, is the formal *tafsīr*? This is a *tafsīr* in form only, not in substance. In other words, the reader will not have a greater understanding of the 'Sura of Joseph' as such – except insofar as the Bab is the new, 'meta-lectic Joseph' (93–139). Even the Bab's paraphrases are not strictly exegetical, insofar as they do not explicate the meaning of the Qur'anic passages being invoked. Granted, this may be a radical reading, and a departure from what Lawson has to say regarding it: 'The chapter chosen for this examination is written in the form of a commentary on the 93rd verse of the sura of Joseph (Qur'an 12)' (92). Yet Lawson elsewhere concedes: 'The work is patently not *tafsīr* in the classical sense. ... Though it is not *tafsīr* in the generic, technical sense, it does say what the meaning of the Qur'an is' (4). This assertion is little more than concession. In any case, Lawson points to the sudden, inexplicable intrusions of apparently unrelated subject matter and/or Qur'anic text, which add to the difficulty of fathoming just what the Bab is doing:

The symbol of the shirt of Joseph is immediately associated with the BEES mentioned in the Qur'an 16 (*Sūrat al-Nahl*/The Sura of the Bees). Such an apparently incongruous and abrupt association of the BEES with the *shirt* of Joseph is quite typical of the Bāb's method throughout this commentary. The Bāb seems to take the BEES out of thin air. As will be seen, this air is actually the exceedingly rich atmosphere of Shi'i exegetical tradition.

(98)

It does appear that the bee and honey imagery is not explained in terms of the 'authorial intent' of the Qur'an itself, but of the intent of the author himself (the Bab). In other words, the Bab is not so much explaining the

Qur'an as using the Qur'an to explain himself. This is what is meant by 'inverse exegesis' and 'interpretation by instantiation', whereby the Qur'an is interpreted as typologically prefiguring 'the reappearance of ... the true Qur'an' (10) which, 'according to tradition, has been in the safekeeping of the Twelfth Imam' (4), whose return was proclaimed in the advent of the Bab.

Suggesting that the Bab is not so much interpreting the Qur'an as invoking the Qur'an to authorize his own advent is perhaps overstating the case and admittedly contradicts, in part, this statement by Lawson: 'There is no doubt that the work is unusual; but to say that it is not interpretive, or that it does not "make clear" what the Qur'an meant is either not to have read it, or to have imposed upon it too rigid a notion about what constitutes *tafsīr*, which is after all "explanation"' (140). But the real 'explanation' at work here is the presentism of the Bab's prophetic advent. Thus *Gnostic Apocalypse's* thesis may be reduced to three words: 'Eisegesis usurps exegesis.'

The 'True Qur'an'

As previously stated, the Bab is not, *strictu sensu*, explicating the Qur'an. Rather, he is expatiating – and thereby announcing – his advent in the guise of interpretation. Indeed, it is utterly remarkable that a Qur'an commentary would be cast in the form of a complete Qur'an. Lawson underscores this very fact: 'Certainly the most striking aspect of the work is that it purports to be at once a commentary on the Qur'an, the 'True Qur'an', and a new Qur'an' (22).

In revealing the Tafsīr Sūrat Yūsuf, the Bab 'is introducing a new scripture or revelation by means of the Trojan horse of exegesis' (22). In other words, the Bab's tafsīr is modelled on the Qur'an – indeed, 'a blatant imitation of the Qur'an itself' (17) – and divided into 111 suras (chapters) each with 42 verses (*ayat*) each, with its language 'cast in rhyming prose (*saj'*)' (17). True, the Qur'anic Sura of Joseph contains 111 verses. That is why there are 111 suras in the Tafsīr Sūrat Yūsuf. The Qur'an has 114 suras. Lawson notes that the Bab assigns titles to each the 111 suras, as in the Qur'an, such that there is 'no question that the use of these titles is meant to suggest the appearance of the new Qur'an' (41). Each sura, moreover, begins with the *bismillāh* ('In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate'), and most of the 111 suras open with mysterious 'disconnected letters', just like the Qur'an.

If this 'interpretation by instantiation' is fundamentally correct, then the end result is that the Bab reveals himself, in his performance as exegete, as the subject and object of that exegesis, where the exegesis is about the exegete rather than the exegeted text. Lawson seems to suggest this: 'But this text is within the soul of the Bāb, who in the act of reading inscribes himself with the read text and becomes a text himself, which he also reads aloud to us: reading reading itself' (135).

In appreciating what Lawson is saying here, three levels of sacred text emerge: (1) the literal text, in and of itself, which is obviously the Qur'an; (2) the 'read text' as the imamological interpretation, wherein the Bab reads 'Joseph' as the Qa'im (the occulted, Twelfth Imam); and (3) the 'text himself', i.e. the 'realized' interpretation in the Bab's prophetological advent as the new, metaleptic Joseph. The substitution of the Qa'im (for the figure

of Joseph in the Qur'an) operates as the first-order metonym, while the Bab's advent functions as the second-order metonym (for the figure of the Bab, who is the advent of the Hidden Imam).

This completes the metalepsis. 'This method, by which the Bāb weaves his own words into the fabric of the Qur'an, is a kind of metalepsis,' Lawson writes (60), which is nothing less than 'the utter and unapologetic manipulation of sacred Scripture—metalepsis' (137). 'Rather,' Lawson concludes, 'the message of the commentary is proclaimed by an invocation of images and symbols, which when combined points to a kind of annunciation' (41).

What appears as a merely literary trope or device, i.e. metalepsis, is actually a spiritual, existential process of presenting the text (the Qur'an), of re-presenting the text (of interpreting Joseph as the Qa'im), of representing—indeed, of instantiating, even incarnating—the text (of interpreting the Qa'im as the Bab himself), as Shi'i tradition predicts: 'When the Qā'im comes forth the shirt of Joseph will be on him, and he will have the staff of Moses and the ring of Solomon' (qtd. on 175, n. 13). Here, through metalepsis, the Bab engages in a profound and sustained meditation ('reading') of the Qur'an and then explicates the text by embodying the text, wherein the Qa'im rises up through the soul/mind of the Bab such that the Bab performs the Qa'im, becomes the Qa'im. In other words, the Bab steps out of the pages of his commentary and emerges as a messiah.

In order to develop Lawson's primary thesis of *Gnostic Apocalypse and Islam*, this review has had to pass over features of this dense, information-rich, and utterly fascinating text. To recapitulate the major point that Lawson makes, it is this: In 'utter and unapologetic manipulation of sacred Scripture—metalepsis,' Lawson writes, the '*Tafsīr Sūrat Yūsuf* may be read, then, as the rising of the Imam through the consciousness of ecstasy, or better "instasy" (*wijdān*), of the Bāb' (137). And further: 'Throughout this "heresy of paraphrase", his [the Bab's] apocalyptic and messianic consciousness "flames forth" and is deliberately, elaborately, and responsibly reflected' (137). Not only that, but the Hidden Imam, as Lawson asserts, actually addresses the Bab in this dramatic passage from verses 38–42 of the 'Sura of the Bees':

38. O Solace of the Eye [the Bab]! Say: 'VERILY, VERILY I [the Bab] AM THE HOUR. HOW IS IT THEN THAT YOU DO NOT KNOW THAT THE HOUR, IN VERY TRUTH, IS NEAR ACCORDING TO THE MOTHER BOOK?' (132) ...
41. AND VERILY, VERILY I [the Bab] AM the fire in the LIGHT UPON LIGHT [Q. 24:35] OF SINAI in the land of Felicity and him had been in the precincts of the Fire [Q. 20:10–11]. (133)
42. O Solace of the Eye [the Bab]! Say to the believers from among all the people of the Earth and the heavens: 'COME TO ME WITH YOUR PEOPLE who are effaced COMPLETELY by the permission of God, the Sublime.' Verily God desires your reward in this Gate [the Bab], upon the most great truth. And He is God, Knower of all things. (134)

According to Lawson, we know that the Hidden Imam apostrophizes the Bab because this is a 'Say! (*qul*)' passage. That is, in each occurrence of the 'Say!' command in the *Tafsīr Sūrat Yūsuf*, the Hidden Imam is directly calling out to the Bab. It may be objected, however, that neither the Qur'an

nor the Tafsīr Sūrat Yūsuf itself states that it is the Qa'im who is summoning the Bab, but rather God, i.e. as the 'voice' of revelation. The occurrence of 'Say!' only confirms this impression. For it is by this expression that God is addressing Muhammad in the Qur'an. Whenever the command 'Say!' occurs in the Qur'an, it is God commanding the Prophet Muhammad to address the people. Why should it be any different in the Tafsīr Sūrat Yūsuf, especially if its resemblance to, and even being a deliberate imitation of the Qur'an in form, is accepted?¹³ Of course, for Shi'i Muslims, the voice of God is conveyed through the Imam as interlocutor. Shi'ism, after all, is imamocentric.

The voice of divine authority is of major importance, for this fact alone establishes the Tafsīr Sūrat Yūsuf as an apocalypse (both cosmologically and eschatologically). Because the apocalypse has not literally occurred on the earthly plane, this eschatological event (the advent of the Bab) is performed a 'Gnostic Apocalypse'. Only those imbued with the perspicuity of faith (i.e. 'gnosis') can 'realize' (i.e. recognize) the occurrence of this apocalypse, what just transpired in the invisible realm of spiritual consciousness. Given its historical context, this fact makes the Qayyūm al-Asmā' truly revolutionary. In a sense, everything else is secondary.

It seems reasonable to assume that the Bab did not really think this was the long-hidden 'true Qur'an' – the actual book in hiding with the Hidden Imam – but rather a metaleptic evocation of it which, in the final analysis, is just as real (if not more real) than any historical artefact might be. It is a 'poetic' truth or 'spiritual' fact – a typological figuration. The 'recognition' scene, cited above, in which the Hidden Imam reveals the 'Gate' (i.e. the Bab) is extremely powerful, apocalyptic, explosive. The Bab is no mere 'Gate' (*al-bāb*) or deputy/interlocutor of the Hidden Imam. The Bab is revealed as the Mosaic flash of fire in the Burning Bush on Mount Sinai, as the light of God, in the language of the 'Verse of Light' (Q. 24: 35), one of the 'jewels of the Qur'an'. But no towering skyscrapers collapse or other catastrophes befall. Rather, the apocalypse is gnostic – unknown except to those who know (with the certitude of presentism that characterizes 'realized eschatology').

The body of the book is relatively error-free. Since errata are useful for subsequent printings, instances of rare typos in the back matter may be noted. The most significant of these oversights is where Lawson refers to prior studies of the Sura of Joseph that he fails to cite beyond the authors' last name: 1: p. 154 (Notes), n. 17: 'See bibliography for the shorter studies by Waldman, Johns, Mir, Morris, Neuwirth, Firestone and monographs by Bajouda, Bernstein, and Prémare among others.'¹⁴

The present work is a refinement of Lawson's doctoral dissertation (1987) at McGill University, Canada.¹⁵ It has aged, matured and sophisticated like fine wine in the barrel of Lawson's subsequent work, and is interspersed with insights arising in subsequent studies. Thus, it is a work of original research on an original figure prismsed by an original mind. *Gnostic Apocalypse and Islam* is an instant classic in Babi/Baha' studies. It is foundational to the academic study of Babi/Baha'i history and doctrine. Not only did it take a scholar with a command of Arabic and of the history, doctrine and arcane philosophy of Shi'i Islam to write *Gnostic Apocalypse and Islam*. It took a gnostic.

Endnotes

1. The author, Todd Lawson, is Emeritus Professor, formerly of the Department of Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations of the University of Toronto, and was cross-appointed at the Centre for the Study of Religion and the Centre for Jewish Studies. Lawson is one of the leading scholars in the academic study of the Babi religion.
2. Cyril O'Regan, *Gnostic Apocalypse: Jacob Boehme's Haunted Narrative*, New York: State University of New York Press, 2002. In fairness, however, other recent Routledge books appear with a similar cover design, as Routledge tends to reuse cover designs.
3. *Oxford English Dictionary* (3rd edn., Dec. 2001).
4. Ethelbert William Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible: Explained and Illustrated*, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1968 [1898], 538.
5. Ibid. 609.
6. Ibid. 609.
7. Ibid. 610.
8. In an endnote (160, n. 13), Lawson refers the reader to O'Regan's *Gnostic Apocalypse*, pp. 115–27 (section 4.2, 'Narrative Swerve: Metalepsis'). The problem is that O'Regan does not define 'metalepsis' in this section.
9. Cyril O'Regan, *Gnostic Return in Modernity*, New York: SUNY Press, 2001, 230.
10. Ibid. 57.
11. Edward Granville Browne, 'The Bábis of Persia. II. Their Literature and Doctrines', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 2 (1889): 906.
12. Trans. Browne, *ibid.*
13. This observation is thanks to Youli A. Ioannesyan, an orientalist at St Petersburg State University and the St Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies under the Russian Academy of Sciences.
14. The interested reader can find the missing references in Todd Lawson, 'Typological Figuration and the Meaning of 'Spiritual': The Qur'anic Story of Joseph', *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 2012, 13(2) 240–244.
15. B. Todd Lawson, 'The Qur'an Commentary of Sayyid 'Alī-Muḥammad, the Bāb (1819–1850)', PhD thesis, Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University, 1987.

The Baha'is of Iran, Transcaspia and the Caucasus. Soli Shahvar, Gad Gilbar and Boris Morozov (eds.)
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Reviewed by I. A. Ioannesyan, Institute of Oriental Manuscripts
Email: youli19@gmail.com

The second half of the 19th century was characterized by an increasing interest in the Babi and Baha'i Faiths in Europe. Diplomats, orientalist and others were making contributions in every conceivable way to the study of this phenomenon: the emergence of a new religion, contradicting the prevalent view that the appearance of new religions was only possible in ancient times because it was thought to be characteristic of early forms of human society.

There was considerable interest in the Babi and the Baha'i Faiths in Russia and Great Britain, countries whose political positions in Iran were exceptionally strong, and whose diplomats therefore had greater opportunities to collect materials on this subject at the very dawn of the religion's history.

Russian diplomats and diplomatic mission staff in Iran were especially active in collecting these materials. Russia's General Consul in Tabriz, A. M. Bezobrazov; General Consul in Astrabad, F. A. Bakulin; chief interpreter of the Russian mission in Tehran, I. G. Grigorovich, and others played a considerable role in the preservation and contribution of Babi and Baha'i manuscripts to the collections in the then capital of the Russian Empire, St Petersburg, and primarily to the collection in the Library of the Institute of Oriental Languages of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, later transferred to the Asiatic Museum.¹ Among the European scholars whose contribution to Baha'i and Babi studies, including the publication of original texts, was exceptionally valuable were Russian orientalist and diplomats Baron V. R. Rosen, A. G. Tumanski and G. D. Batyushkov.

Rosen left to posterity a vast collection of unpublished materials which, among other purposes, are of extreme value for the study of the Babi and Baha'i Faiths, as well as for research on Babi and Baha'i studies in Europe. These materials in Russian, English, French, Persian and Arabic are for the most part preserved in the Archive of the Russian Academy of Sciences in St Petersburg, Russia. The late Soviet scholar N. A. Kuznetsova was the first to work on and quote from them directly in her article.² Later the archive

documents with quotes in English were presented at the 'Irfan Colloquium by Y. Ioannesyan.³

The book under review consists of two volumes and comprises documents in English translation, introductory essays, biographical and other notes, glossary and illustrations. 'The volumes include letters and reports found in five separate archives in St. Petersburg and Moscow' in English translation. (vol. 1, p. 13). The list of archives used for the book is impressive. But the great majority of the documents presented are from the Archive of the Russian Academy of Sciences in St Petersburg.

Volume I contains letters of V. I. Ignatyev, A. G. Tumanski, A. P. Orlov and G. D. Batyushkov preceded by three essays (by S. Shahvar, B. Morozov and G. Gilbar). The first two were Baron Rosen's former students. Tumanski as a young captain in the Russian imperial army, while serving in the Turkistan region (Ashkabad), came into close contact with the recently established Baha'i community there and became interested in the Baha'i teachings. He was the first translator of the central Baha'i writing, the *Kitab-i-Aqdas*, into a European language (Russian). Ignatyev was a diplomat working in Tehran, Ashkabad and Bukhara where he was watching the development of the newly emerging religion. Batyushkov was both a diplomat working in Tehran and a scholar (see below) who found the Baha'i Faith an interesting religious phenomenon. He always tried to collect Baha'i writings and protect them from destruction where possible. Another of Rosen's former students, Orlov, served as a secretary of the Russian consulate in Astrabad.

The first essay (1–47) entitled: 'The Baha'i Faith and its Communities in Iran, Transcaspia and the Caucasus' presents a very accurate account of the history of the Babi and Baha'i Faiths since their inception up to the end of the 19th – beginning of the 20th centuries. It explores the historic background and traces the origins of the Babi and Baha'i Faiths, the interrelationship between them, the origin of the term 'Baha'i' and the emergence of the first followers of Baha'u'llah, referred to as '*ahl al-Baha*' or Baha'is. A convincing attempt is made to explain the causes of the confusion between the terms 'Babi' and 'Baha'i', which existed in the minds of many people including scholars and diplomats as evidenced by their private and official correspondence and which has not been cleared up completely up today. The whole essay is based on carefully verified and authenticated historic facts covering also such complicated issues as the break-up between Azal, 'whom the Bab had made the nominal leader of the Babi community', and Baha'u'llah. The Baha'i Faith is described as 'a new religion wholly distinct from Islam' (vol. 1, p. 1), which is a correct and precise definition unfortunately lacking in works of some other authors. The most revolutionary features of the teachings of the Bab who is described as 'not simply claiming to be the Mahdi, but also the bringer of a new divine revelation' (vol. 1, p. 2) are summarized.

Special attention is given to the central book of the Baha'i Faith, the *Kitab-i-Aqdas* with an emphasis on the laws and ordinances of the new religion highlighting such aspects as the obligations of the individual believer including daily prayer, an annual fast, voluntary payment of a portion of one's excessive wealth to be spent for spreading the faith and charitable purposes, engaging in a trade or profession, educating one's children, cleanliness and living a moral life; prohibitions including murder, theft,

arson, adultery, slavery, asceticism, mendicancy, gambling, intoxicants, backbiting, fanaticism, conflict, contention and sedition along with the abrogation of the Islamic law of the sword (i.e. jihad) for the propagation of religion. Baha'ullah's directing Baha'is to associate with the followers of all religions with amity and concord and cancelling various restrictions of the Koran and the Bayan as well as the establishment of the House of Justice and 'Abdu'l-Baha's appointment as Baha'u'llah's successor are also mentioned.

Factors contributing to the spread of the Baha'i Faith in Iran and other Islamic countries are also analysed. These include certain Baha'i teachings and principles such as a positive attitude toward economic activity, the emphasis on the need for everyone to engage in work or a profession in order to support themselves and their families as well as the endorsement of the individual's right to property ownership. Baha'ullah's denouncement of corruption and oppression coupled with the repeated calls for trustworthiness and justice are also named among the factors involved. The spread of the Baha'i Faith is seen largely related to the fact that it 'became a source of religious, moral and social modernism in Qajar Iran, continuously drawing converts not only from the Babi community but also from the majority Shi'i population... as well as from other religious minorities...' (7). This resulted in 'not only the further dissemination of reformist ideas in Qajar society, but also [in] the conversion of more people to the new religion and the creation of new communities' (11).

The expansion of the Baha'i Faith outside of Iran largely due to the activities of 'Abdu'l-Baha and efforts of individual believers is also considered. This part is mainly focused on the emergence of Baha'i communities in different regions of the Russian Empire such as Transcaspia (Ashgabat, Bukhara, Samarkand), the Caucasus (Baku) etc. The illuminating account of the history of the Baha'i community in Ashgabat covers many significant events and episodes (the erection of the first Baha'i temple, the martyrdom of Haji Muhammad-Riza Isfahani, etc.), which despite being crucial to the history of the Baha'i Faith are almost unknown to the general public. This historic account is a good format for highlighting the attitude of the Russian authorities towards the new religion as well. The whole section on history ends with the following major conclusion: 'Although the Babi movement had asserted a revolutionary message that broke sharply with Islamic orthodoxy and led to the stigmatization of the Babis as radical and dangerous revolutionaries, once transformed by Baha'u'llah into a moderate and pro-reform religion, the Baha'i Faith experienced heightened numerical expansion, as the movement appealed not only to former Babis but to Shi'is and to religious minorities. Nevertheless, as believers in a post-Muhammadan revelation, Baha'is were still widely regarded as heretics, and thus persecution of, and opposition to, the Baha'is continued' (45).

The second essay (49–68) entitled: 'Russian Orientalism and Babi/Baha'i Studies' is a brief account of the history of Russian orientalism in a wider context and with respect to the Babi and Baha'i Faiths in particular. The establishment of the Russian academic school of oriental studies served as a historic background and prelude to research in such fields as the Babi and Baha'i Faiths in Tsarist Russia. It is with this school that the academic activity of V. R. Rosen, pioneer of Baha'i studies in Russia, was

directly connected. Accordingly, the historic account draws a picture of some general processes and tendencies observed in 19th-century Russia's scholarly and diplomatic circles with an emphasis on how Babi and Baha'i materials were being collected. Special attention is given to the key figures: Rosen, Batyushkov, Tumanski, Ignatyev and Orlov. Batyushkov's contribution, of whom the author of the essay says that 'only one of [his six letters to Rosen] was really devoted to Babis and Baha'is (63), appears largely underestimated. In fact his three letters are very relevant to the subject. The description of Batyushkov's published work (G. Batyushkov, *Babidy. Persidskaya Sekta* ('The Babis: a Persian sect', St Petersburg, 1897) which came out in the form of a small book (28 pages) and is referred to in the essay as 'an article', in the opinion of the present writer, is not appropriate: 'Unfortunately there was nothing new in it: the article only summarized already-known facts regarding history of the Bab, his teachings and his followers' (63). Such assessment of Batyushkov's work and his input to Babi/Baha'i studies raises the question: to whom were these 'already-known facts' known? Definitely, not to the majority of the author's contemporaries given the fact that even the general reader today is not familiar with the information presented in Batyushkov's work. The latter, however, apart from a historic value contains some interesting prognoses concerning the possible future of the Baha'i Faith in Iran and the positive role it may play in the restoration of Iranian culture, which, at least, deserves noting.

The third essay (69–82) entitled: 'Baha'u'llah, the Iranian *tujjar* and the New Approach to Interest' is devoted to what is defined in the book as 'significant economic aspects relating to the Baha'is in Iran and neighboring territories revealed in the correspondence' [mainly Tumanski's letters] (68). The essay analyses the economic situation in Iran and what is described as 'the profound economic and social transformation having to do with the country's integration in the world economic system ... that formed the setting for the affinity of the *tujjar* [merchants] with Baha'u'llah's new economic approach" (70). The essay consists of the following subdivisions: 'A Period of Economic and Social Transformation', 'A New Perception of Interest' and 'Tujjar and the Clergy' and ends with some interesting conclusions.

Volume 2 is fully devoted to official Russian diplomatic dispatches, correspondence and reports covering the period 1848–1928. It is chronologically divided into five sections: Part 1 (1848–68), Part 2 (1869–90), Part 3 (1890–95), Part 4 (1896–1901/02), Part 5 (1902–28). As the editors point out in the Preface:

Not only do they (diplomatic dispatches – Y. I.) provide a unique insight into the perception of Russian diplomats and officials regarding significant events in Babi and Baha'i history ... but they also help us perceive the development of the Russians' understanding of the Babi and Baha'i religions as well as the formation of Russian attitudes and policy toward the Babis and Baha'is in Iran and Russia during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

As for the documents presented in the book, since they speak for themselves I will not discuss them here except for making a few points that seem to me important. Given the fact that these documents are archival the book would have benefited if it contained not only translations but the originals

(in Russian, French and Persian) as well. It is always preferable to enable a qualified scholarly user of primary source documents to verify translations or check on a particular phrase, term or nuance by comparing the passage in question with the original. Every document in the book is supplied with a reference to its archive code and the pages it covers in an endnote. However, displaying also the original folio page number of every part of the document would have been very appropriate. This would have enabled the potential user (when taking notes or quoting a passage for their own research) to reference the original folio of the document in the archive (primary source) instead of the corresponding page of this book (secondary source).

I would like to conclude this review by emphasizing the fact that archival documents are an important source for studying the history of the Babi and Baha'i religions. Consequently, any effort to make these priceless materials available for scholars in an academic format should be encouraged and praised. Apart from archival documents the book also contains introductory essays presenting verified and reliable data as well as unbiased analysis of the facts. It is obviously a valuable contribution to both Baha'i/Babi and Iranian studies. The book is addressed to Iranologists, historians specializing in the Middle and Near East as well as in 19th-century Russia and its policy of the time, scholars engaged in comparative religious studies and students acquiring knowledge in the related fields. A wide scholarly readership will find valuable information in it.

Endnotes

1. This academic establishment now bears the name of the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts (former St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies) of the Russian Academy of Sciences.
2. See Kuznetsova N. A. *K Istorii Izucheniia Babizma i Behaizma v Rossii* ('On the history of studies in the Babi and Baha'i Faiths') *Ocherki po Istorii Russkogo Vostokovedeniia*. Moscow: Vostochnaya Literatura. 1963 (in Russian).
3. See Y. Ioannesyan, *Baron Rosen's Archive Collection of Babi and Baha'i Materials* 'Lights of Irfan'. Papers presented at the 'Irfan Colloquia and seminars, book 8, general editor Iraj Ayman. [USA] Evanston IL, 2007, pp. 11–35.

***The Bahá'í Faith in Africa: Establishing a New Religious Movement, 1952–1962.* Anthony A. Lee. Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2011**

xii, 280 pp. Studies of Religion in Africa, vol. 39.
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Reviewed by Loni Bramson, American Public University System
Email: loni.bramson@mycampus.apus.edu

Anthony Lee, PhD in African History (UCLA), slightly revised his doctoral dissertation, 'The Bahá'í Faith in West Africa', to publish *The Bahá'í Faith in Africa*. The book focuses on west and west-central Africa with little about any other region of Africa. Therefore, this review is primarily limited to the western area of this continent. Lee has rendered the scholarly community a great service, as this is the first academic book on the history of the Baha'i Faith in Africa. However, he explains that his work is limited because he did not conduct fieldwork in Africa. Lee primarily based his analysis on original fieldwork in Africa performed by Dr Donald Addison, research in the Swiss Basle Mission Archives and the United States National Baha'i Archives, Valerie Wilson's papers, and two interviews that he conducted in the United States. Nevertheless, this book, published by Brill, will attract other scholars to start researching on a subject that has been grossly ignored.

Lee starts his book with two introductory chapters. The first includes general background information on the Babi and Baha'i religions and an explanation of his methodology. The second provides interesting, albeit superfluous for this publication, research on the history of Africans in Iran at the time of the birth of the Babi and Baha'i faiths. The third chapter, entitled 'Opting for the Apocalypse: The Bahá'í Response to the Modern Crisis in the Middle East and West Africa', informs the reader of the theory that Lee used as the basis for his analysis. The fourth chapter describes the first decade of the establishment of the Baha'i Faith in West Africa. The final three chapters look more closely at the establishment of the Baha'i Faith in Nigeria and Cameroon.

Lee starts his methodology chapter, chapter 3, with an excellent set of research questions that formed the basis for how he approached the subject. His theoretical focus is clarified in a subsection of the chapter, 'The Crisis of Modernity', with emphasis on Peter Berger's work on modernity. Lee concludes, 'The Bahá'í teachings offered a way of renewing the missionary dream by reaching into the future to make use of eschatological promises of Christianity.' Although Lee shows in this chapter that he understands the importance that colonialism and the decolonization crisis played in Africans rejecting Christianity and the Christian missions, he does not sufficiently discuss African Traditional Religion, also called African Indigenous Religion.

Lee not only insufficiently examines African Traditional Religion in his book; he also does not distinguish between differing conceptions of religion, specifically those in the United States and Europe with those in West Africa. Kofi Asare Opoku, in a book to prepare students for examinations

such as the West African Senior School Certificate Examination, explained the African worldview,

A close observation of Africa and its societies will reveal that religion is at the root of African culture and is the determining principle of African life. It is no exaggeration, therefore, to say that in traditional Africa, religion is life and life, religion. Africans are engaged in religion in whatever they do – whether it be farming, fishing or hunting; or simply eating, drinking or travelling. Religion gives meaning and significance to their lives, both in this world and the next. It is hence not an abstraction but a part of reality and everyday life. In other words, as Professor Idowu has so aptly put it, Africans are ‘a people who in all things are religious’.²

Therefore, in order for a new religion to solidly anchor itself in a West African society, it must be able to completely integrate into African culture. This element of the West African attitude toward life must be analysed in order to understand why the Baha’i Faith succeeded in establishing itself. Not doing so is one of the major flaws of this book.

The Christian missionaries, of course, did not just bring their religion. They were part of the whole colonial effort to impose Western power over the African people. Necessary to this conquest was having Africans abandon their culture; the missionaries were at the forefront of accomplishing this. Here we see a conflict, crucial to understanding why Africans accepted the Baha’i Faith that Lee, again, insufficiently addresses. The colonizers wanted to establish their hegemonic agency over the Africans, who struggled to retain their culture, traditions, rituals, customs and religious beliefs. African traditional religion, as explained above, is at the core of Nigerian and Cameroon society. Socialization occurs, for example, through the rituals performed during rites of passage, such as birth, naming and puberty. Christianity did not accept this, whereas the Baha’i Faith did.

Further, Lee states that not much is known of how Enoch Olinga,³ who was mainly responsible for the early implantation of the Baha’i Faith in Nigeria and Cameroon, spoke about his new religion to potential converts.⁴ Had Lee taken the opportunity to interview the early converts to the Baha’i Faith in this area who became Baha’i through Olinga, and their children, a more nuanced and appreciative portrayal of Enoch Olinga might have emerged. Olinga understood how central indigenous culture is in the life of an African, and showed respect for it while he was propagating the Baha’i Faith in Cameroon, and later in Nigeria. Anyone who spends sufficient time in this area of the world can recognize the importance of respecting traditional African culture for the successful spreading of new ideas.

One element of the way Enoch Olinga and other teachers successfully propagated the Baha’i teachings was through hosting ‘tea parties’, or generally sharing food and drink when they visited someone. These meetings attracted young men because an older man served them, which showed great respect. When Olinga ate or drank with them, it also showed how much he honoured and trusted them, as it took an act of courage to eat and drink anything that could potentially be poisoned. Poisoning is a real or imagined threat for anyone who goes to live in a different area away from his own tribe. Oscar Njang gives an example of this. A Cameroonian

pioneer in Enugu was poisoned for showing kindness to a woman.⁵ By ingesting the food and drink, the Baha'is showed that they trusted the people they were talking to about the Baha'i Faith. The people who shared food and drink with Enoch Olinga felt the respect that he had for them and their customs.⁶ Sharing food and drink while explaining the Baha'i teachings was, and remains, an important means of propagating the Baha'i Faith in this part of Africa.

Anthony Lee's understanding of the status of women at this time is also curious. In numerous places in the book, he questions why women did not convert.⁷ This had everything to do with colonial and traditional laws. In Nigeria, well into the twentieth century, women could not take a job, travel, open or close a bank account, leave or enter the country, or have any legal rights to their children. The situation was not different in most other parts of Africa. Another example is the 1982 continental Baha'i conference in Lagos, Nigeria. Months and months of work were expended on Baha'i men to allow their wives and daughters to attend the Lagos conference. Nor does Lee investigate the appropriateness of men speaking to women in different cultures about the Baha'i Faith, or women speaking to men. For women to have more freedom, including whom they spoke with other than in a business or official situation, such as the market women, they needed to be 'an honorary man', for example a chief or university professor. For a woman to become a Baha'i, especially in the early years, it needed an extraordinary husband, such as Oscar Njang. His wife, Elizabeth, became a Baha'i when she saw the lack of prejudice that white Baha'is had for the Africans, which included sharing lodgings and food, a rare action during the colonial era and even well after. The Rosenbergs, an interracial American couple, stayed two days with the Njang family. It was through Elizabeth Njang that many women converted to the Baha'i Faith in the Calabar region, thus earning her the nickname of 'Tahirih of Nigeria'.⁸

In chapter 6 on the establishment of the Baha'i Faith in British Cameroons, Lee states that Enoch Olinga had little contact with non-Christian Africans, and one paragraph, referring to Olinga, must be fully quoted:

The attitudes that he expresses toward villagers practicing African Traditional Religions ('Juju') may seem surprising, at first. However, Olinga had been born into a strict Christian family in Uganda, and these attitudes are precisely those taught in Christian schools and churches. This lack of familiarity with non-Christian religions demonstrates how completely Olinga was working from a Christianized perspective. Without question, he finds the pagan villagers he encounters benighted, and he appears genuinely frightened by their capacity to perform evil. He imagines himself struggling against this evil, with the protection of Baha'u'llah. Such a vision certainly recapitulates Olinga's father's early work as an Anglican teacher in Uganda. The correspondence is almost exact. As his father had found successful methods of teaching Christianity to non-Christians, so Olinga would be successful with his Baha'i message.⁹

To understand the history of this era, the book needed a more thorough and nuanced understanding of African Traditional Religion. For example, juju and witchcraft are not synonymous with African Traditional Religion;

the book lacks this explanation. The use of 'pagan' is a European-American term that African academics find offensive. Someone who has not lived in this part of the world can easily misunderstand, as did Lee, that although juju and witchcraft are part of the West African cultural matrix, African Traditional Religion is considerably richer than that. What Lee did can be likened to a scholar stating that Catholicism is nothing more than the superstitious veneration of saints.

Enoch Olinga was not only cognizant of African culture, norms, traditions and religion, but showed respect for them, and when teaching about the Baha'i Faith, Olinga did not hesitate to bring out the similarities between African culture and the Baha'i Faith. An example of this occurred in the Mamfe district of Cameroon, where Olinga received the honour of being inducted as a member of the Nyamkpe society. This is a traditional Bayagi-Ejagam society for law enforcement. As a member of this society, he was obviously quite knowledgeable about African Traditional Religion.¹⁰ An important element of how Olinga taught the Baha'i Faith and tried to change religious attitudes at variance with Baha'i teachings was his example of how he lived his life, and his patience in explaining when and how practices and attitudes were at odds between traditional religion and the Baha'i Faith.

Another seriously problematic section of the book relates to Lee's analysis of a 'Baha'i Church'. Nigerian Baha'is who lived during the era when Enoch Olinga taught the Baha'i Faith in Nigeria, and scholars who have studied the Baha'i Faith in this country, think that the church in Calabar is a minor blip in Nigerian Baha'i history. Lee's emphasis on it demonstrates another aspect of his misunderstanding of the Baha'i Faith's history in this region of the world. In his conclusion, Lee asks if the so-called 'Baha'i' church in Calabar should even be considered to be Baha'i at all. He thinks yes;¹¹ people in or who have worked in Nigeria, and who know the history of the Baha'i Faith in Nigeria, disagree. Listening to the same interviews as Lee, and knowing the people involved, a viable alternative interpretation is that, at this point, the founders were Christians who felt alienated from local churches because they did not speak the same language, and they wanted to create a religious space for themselves. There is no evidence that Oscar Njang attempted to establish another, similar church in Akpabuyo, because when he moved there, after a dispute between himself and Peter Oban-Etchi, he first joined an established church.¹² Therefore, according to the same sources that Lee used, Njang became a Baha'i after the collapse of the Calabar church, and Oban-Etchi, some time after that.¹³ Njang became a Baha'i in Akpabuyo after Enoch Olinga contacted him.¹⁴ Olinga, at that time, had not yet met Njang or Oban-Etchi. Olinga's address was in the copy of *Paris Talks*¹⁵ that was available to Njang and Oban-Etchi. A Cameroonian in Nigeria wrote to Olinga and included Njang's new address in Akpabuyo.¹⁶ It is at this point that Olinga wrote to Njang to encourage him to commit to being a Baha'i. Enoch Olinga helped Njang and the others to act on their desire to convert to the Baha'i Faith, and to better understand their new religion by sending them copious letters that included the text of his speeches on the Baha'i Faith. Therefore, in which way can what happened in Calabar be a Baha'i church? An alternative explanation is that in Calabar, Christians founded a church on principles read in *Paris Talks*. These Christians then

converted to the Baha'i Faith, and from that point on, strove to establish Baha'i institutions.

Anthony Lee was generous to send this reviewer some of his archival material, which allowed the above alternative interpretation and analysis to be presented. In the conclusion of his book, and in email messages, he understands that this book is the beginning of the work on the history of the Baha'i Faith in Africa; a point of view to which I wholeheartedly agree. In the conclusion he clearly states that his doctoral research was based on limited sources, and that he had never been to Africa. This, regrettably, led to faulty analysis and conclusions, partially because he does not understand the culture and also because he did not verify his interpretation of the material that he had. When Lee conducted his doctoral research, the people mentioned in the archival material were still alive, and Lee did not even try to contact them through letters.

Future historians who study the Baha'i Faith in Africa need to understand the culture, have access to the archival material in Africa, and while important informants are alive, need to establish a relationship with them and personally interview them. Both Lee and I agree that it is important for Africans to arise to write their own history. They better understand their culture and society, and have easier access to the necessary people to interview and to archival material. In terms of this book, the above-mentioned problems and the price of the book restrict the scope of those likely to be interested in purchasing this volume. It will primarily be of use to individuals who wish to study the history of the Baha'i Faith in West Africa thanks to Lee's in-depth and excellent analysis of the Swiss Basle Mission Archives.

Endnotes

1. Anthony A. Lee, *The Bahá'í Faith in Africa: Establishing a New Religious Movement, 1952–1962*, Leiden: Brill, 2011, 59.
2. Kofi Asare Opoku, *West African Traditional Religion*, Accra, Ghana: FEP International, 1978, 1.
3. Enoch Olinga (1926–79) was an early Ugandan Baha'i; he converted to the Baha'i Faith in 1952. He was an economist. His dedication to his adopted religion inspired him to serve it as a missionary (which Baha'is call 'pioneer'). In 1957, Shoghi Effendi, the administrative head of the Baha'i Faith, appointed Olinga to the high rank of Hand of the Cause of God. These individuals served Shoghi Effendi, and later the Universal House of Justice, as his representative around the globe. Olinga was killed in 1979 during the chaotic aftermath of overthrowing the Ugandan dictator, Ida Amin.
4. Lee, 59, 142, 145.
5. Oscar Njang, interview by Donald Addison, Ikot Uba, Akpabuyo, Nigeria, 27 June 1981.
6. Ibid.
7. See, for instance, Lee, 148–9.
8. Oscar Njang, interview by Donald Addison.
9. Lee, 166.
10. Michael Forchu, email message to Loni Bramson, 19 December 2012.
11. Lee, 221–2.
12. Lee, 206; Oscar Njang, interview by Donald Addison; Oscar Njang, interview by the Secretary of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Nigeria, Lagos, Nigeria, January 1992.
13. Lee, 211.

14. Oscar Njang, interview by Donald Addison; Oscar Njang, interview by the Secretary of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Nigeria, Lagos.
15. *Paris Talks* is a small book with talks by Abdu'l-Baha, son of the founder of the Baha'i Faith, Baha'u'llah.
16. Ibid.

***Philosophic Values and World Citizenship: Locke to Obama and Beyond.* Jacoby Adeshai Carter and Leonard Harris (eds.). Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2010. 247 pp. ISBN 978-0-7391-4803-7 (hbk), \$90.00 (£57.95) ISBN 978-1-4616-3403-4 (eBook), \$89.99 (£57.95)**

Reviewed by **Christopher Buck**, Pennsylvania State University
Email: buckc@msu.edu

World Citizenship: Promise and Delivery

Philosophic Values and World Citizenship ('*World Citizenship*'), as the title indicates, aims at connecting the values philosophy of Alain Locke (1885–1954) and peers with the global ethic of world citizenship. To what extent does this volume deliver on its promise?

World Citizenship is effectively the proceedings volume of a 2008 conference of the Alain Locke Society held at George Washington University. This multi-author work succeeds in catapulting Locke into the limelight as a cosmopolitan, by showcasing Locke as an advocate of world citizenship, as no other previous publication on Locke has done. Indeed, prior to this, Locke, for the most part, had been frozen in time as the 1925 editor of *The New Negro: An Interpretation*, thus privileging Locke as a 'race man'. *World Citizenship* features Locke as a man of the human race.

In the 'Introduction' (xi–xvii), editors Jacoby Adeshai Carter and Leonard Harris rightly note that 'Locke's philosophy holds the universal and the particular in creative tension' (xiii). *World Citizenship* tautens this tension by maintaining a delicate balance between Locke's 'advocacy aesthetics' (xi) and 'his emphasis on emancipation' and 'transvaluation of values' (xii). The book is divided into three sections: 'Value' (1–73), 'Tolerance' (77–136) and 'Cosmopolitanism' (139–233). Each of these three parts opens with a short work or two by Locke.

In answer to the opening question, *World Citizenship* delivers on its promise, but not as nearly as coherently as a monograph might have, since the thirteen chapters (apart from Locke's five essays) are rather uneven. The reader 'listens in' on the 2008 conference of the Alain Locke Society, and is thereby a vicarious participant. Yet it is, after all, a colloquy of philosophers, who discourse in their own jargon, and are in conversation with each other. Some authors, more than others, are aware of their projected audience – their readers – which contributes to a certain unevenness of

treatment of the theme of ‘world citizenship’ and its value predicates, as might be expected. What follows is a guided tour of the book, from start to finish.

Part 1: ‘Value’ (1–73)

Part 1 begins with two essays by Alain Locke: ‘Moral Imperatives for World Order’ (1944) (1–2) and ‘Unity Through Diversity: A Bahá’í Principle’ (1932) by Alain Locke (2–5). Oddly, neither essay is given a proper citation, let alone an introduction. The same lack of citation holds true for another Locke essay published in this volume, ‘World Citizenship: Mirage or Reality?’ (1947) (139–45).

‘Moral Imperatives for World Order’ opens with these arresting words: ‘Realism and idealism should be combined in striking for a world order’ (1). Locke takes Christian ‘salvation’ to task for its limitations:

We must in the third place consider religion as having many ways leading to salvation. The idea that there is only one true way of salvation with all other ways leading to damnation is a tragic limitation to Christianity, which professes the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. How foolish in the eyes of foreigners are our competitive blind, sectarian missionaries! If the Confucian expression of a Commandment means the same as the Christian expression, then it is the truth also and should so be recognized. It is in this way alone that Christianity or any other enlightened religion can vindicate its claims to Universality; and so bring about moral and spiritual brotherhood. (2)

Locke spells out just what he means by his title: ‘The moral imperatives of a new world order are an internationally limited idea of national sovereignty, a non-monopolistic and culturally tolerant concept of race and religious loyalties freed of sectarian bigotry’ (2). Thus *World Citizenship* is off to a good start, with a global reordering predicated on reciprocity and mutuality of nations, races and religions.

The latter essay, ‘Unity Through Diversity: A Bahá’í Principle’ is the only major association between Alain Locke and the Baha’i Faith, which Locke embraced in 1918, the very same year that he was awarded his PhD in Philosophy from Harvard. Over the years, Leonard Harris has consistently drawn attention to Locke’s predisposition to Baha’i values, which may be said to represent cosmopolitanism made sacred. Harris had previously anthologized this essay,¹ the most oft-quoted statement of which is this: ‘What we need to learn most is how to discover unity and spiritual equivalence underneath the differences which at present so disunite and sunder us, and how to establish some basic spiritual reciprocity on the principle of unity in diversity’ (3).

Not surprisingly, Locke’s Baha’i identity is closeted throughout the rest of part 1 – indeed, from the volume as a whole – effectively shutting out Locke’s Baha’i values from the analysis that follows. Thus, apart from the ‘Unity Through Diversity’ essay itself, the Baha’i dimension is singularly lacking, which subtracts a hermeneutical key in understanding Locke’s outlook as a cosmopolitan. That said, this volume does some justice to Locke’s philosophical contributions.

Rose Cherubin, in chapter 1, 'Culture and the *Kalos*: Inquiry, Justice, and Value in Locke and Aristotle' (7–19), discusses Locke 'at his most Greek' (7), looking at Locke's notion of 'culture' in light of Aristotle's concept of *kalos* ('beautiful' / 'noble'). Art is not only of intrinsic worth, in and of itself, but, in Locke's and Aristotle's conceptions of it, is strategically allied with 'beauty, justice, and the search for knowledge' which are 'mutually supportive' (17). Although not explicitly stated, the implication here – in connection with this volume's overarching theme of world citizenship – is that 'to pursue justice without inquiring after beauty or knowledge is self-defeating' (17).

Art, in contrast with the previous essay, may be 'beautiful', but not 'noble'. Erin Kealey, in chapter 2, 'Aesthetic Evaluations of Realist Drama' (21–29), talks about 'realist drama' without ever explicitly defining it. A typical metaphor for realist drama is holding up a mirror to humanity in order to reflect on itself, warts and all. The mirror itself can be grossly distorted, as in film propaganda. Kealey offers D. W. Griffith's 1915 epic, *Birth of a Nation*, as a technically superb work that supports, *inter alia*, the role of the Ku Klux Klan in protecting the prevailing social interests of the Deep South – such that the film, at once, is 'morally abhorrent' yet 'aesthetically beautiful' (24). In the case of *Birth of a Nation*, while its aesthetic mode was critically acclaimed, 'the real events that inspire the dramatic content' may be 'evaluated in a different mode that assigns a moral predicate, like right or wrong, or even a religious predicate, like good or evil' (25). This conflict of moral and aesthetic values can create the possibility of 'transvaluation' – which, after having an atypical emotional association with the object of value, is valuing that object in a different way. 'Aesthetic experiences', Kealey concludes, 'allow us to recognize values established by other modes' (28). Thus, according to Kealey, realist drama has the potential for establishing 'a space for personal and social transvaluation' (28). Again, while no connection with the book's theme of world citizenship is made, the implication is that drama can offer up new vistas for seeing values in a pluralistic light.

Grant Silva, in chapter 3, 'The Axiological Turn in Early Twentieth Century American Philosophy: Alain Locke and José Vasconcelos on Epistemology, Value, and the Emotions' (31–55), develops Locke's values axiology further, shifting the focus from persons to cultures, as 'patterns of valuation that are consistent across groups of people' (40). Silva compares Locke's theory of values with José Vasconcelos (1882–1959). Both were 'philosophical anthropologists' (31). Due to lack of space, this reviewer will skip over Silva's analysis of Vasconcelos, which occupies equal, if not greater space than his discussion of Locke.

Leonard Harris, in chapter 4, 'Conundrum of Cosmopolitanism and Race: The Great Debate between Alain Locke and William James' (57–73), presents a problematic or 'conundrum' that faced Oxford's Cosmopolitan Club when Locke, the first African American Rhodes Scholar, joined in 1907: '[H]ow is it possible to promote universalism, or common culture, and simultaneously promote local culture, or a particular racial, national or ethic [*sic*: read 'ethnic'] culture?' (61). Harris then poses an interesting hypothetical colloquy of philosophers: 'Imagine that the Metaphysical Club inadvertently met the Cosmopolitan Club' (64).

Like Oxford's Cosmopolitan Club, Harvard's Metaphysical Club was cosmopolitan. In this mythical meeting of the Cosmopolitan and

Metaphysical Clubs, two of the Metaphysical Club's philosophers – [Oliver Wendell] Holmes and [Charles Sanders] Peirce – 'might not sit for dinner with Locke and Seme' (64). But the Clubs' leading pragmatists, Alain Locke and William James, would dine together and engage in philosophical discussion. Each had 'a deep dedication to a metaphysical pluralism that allowed James to be something of a religious mystic and Locke to sojourn with the B'há'i [*sic*: read 'Bahá'í'] faith and its brave insistence on racial egalitarianism' (64). For Locke, race is a social construct: 'Instead, therefore, of regarding culture as a product of race, race, by this interpretation, is regarded as itself a cultural produce' [*sic*: read 'product'] (70). Harris then contrasts Locke's 'Dynamic Theory of Value' with James's 'uniformitarian universalism' (66).

Part 2: 'Tolerance' (77–136)

Alain Locke, in 'A Functional View of Value Ultimates' (1945) (77–81) advocates a 'functionalist theory of value' for its ability to treat various values 'in terms of their interrelationships, guaranteeing a comparative and a more realistic type of value analysis' (77) that may lead 'toward a relativistic but not anarchic ethics, world view and religion' (81).

Greg Moses, in chapter 5, 'A Funtional [*sic*: read 'Functional'] Peace in *This World: Farmer and Locke on the Challenges of a Truly Post-War Hope*' (83–96), looks at the views of two professors of Howard University, Alain Locke and J. Leonard Farmer, who 'analyzed what would be needed to produce lasting peace after World War II' (83). Locke focused on democracy, while Farmer concentrated on Christianity. The Federal Council of the Churches of Christ had, in 1943, proposed a six-point peace platform (91). Out of this history, Moses grandly asks: 'Can laws of good will transcend the name of democracy? By introducing the ideal of peace on earth as the criterion that challenges symbol with value, could the symbols of Christianity and Democracy both discover that they cannot be the common denominators that they most desire to share?' (90). In answer, Farmer writes of both international and domestic peace among and within nations: 'The world cannot be saved until it is saved socially; and this social salvation must include all races and classes within each nation. Only this all-inclusive salvation of the world is the fullest expression of God' (94). Locke has stated likewise.

Arnold L. Farr, in chapter 6, 'Beyond Repressive Tolerance: Alain Locke's Hermeneutics of Democracy and Tolerance in Conversation with Herbert Marcuse and H. G. Gadamer' (97–110), after comparing discourses on tolerance by Marcuse, Gadamer and Locke, advocates adoption of Locke's methodology (in Farr's words) of 'objective comparison between different value systems,' which (in Locke's words) may serve as 'functional constants' to 'take scientifically the place of our outmoded categoricals' (109). It is true that Locke proposed judging social values on a comparative basis in quest of functionally equivalent, and objectively identical, standards – which common denominators Locke variously termed 'culture-cognates' or 'culture-correlates', fostering, in turn, 'reciprocity' (a real exchange of values), even leading to a 'limited cultural convertibility' whereby a nation, or group of nations, might selectively adopt a universal value.² Locke's methodology of 'functional constants' to pragmatically

arrive at common denominators that may serve as verifiable universals in operationalizing world peace, while praised in theory, was never put into practice.

Christopher J. Collins, in chapter 7, 'Multicultural Education, Metaphysics, and Alain Locke's Post-Metaphysical Alternative' (111–22), evaluates 'Locke's philosophy of education, informed by his value theory' (112) in conversation with Allan Bloom's and Richard Rorty's respective theory's of multiculturalism within the university curriculum. For Locke, the university is a forum for the critical study of values (117–18). The implication here, as it relates to the book as a whole, is that multicultural education cultivates world citizenship.

A. Todd Franklin, in chapter 8, 'Unlikely Allies: Nietzsche, Locke, and Counter-Hegemonic Transformation of Consciousness' (123–36), presents Friedrich Nietzsche, a 'caustic critic of democracy and all other ideologies of human equality' (123), and Alain Locke as 'unlikely allies who employ variations of a common method' (123) to counter value absolutism, which both philosophers regarded as a social pathology. While Nietzsche stressed the importance of individuality as the key to cultural health (124–5), Locke stressed the importance of mutual respect (125–6). Both used 'aesthetic means and methods to induced [*sic*: read 'induce'] cultural transformation' (134). While Nietzsche's antidote to Christian dogmatism was outright contempt, Locke aimed at fostering empathy, which meant artistically advocating satire, irony, social protest and social analysis as 'good medicines ... against social poison' (131).

Part 3: 'Cosmopolitanism' (139–233)

Alain Locke, in 'World Citizenship: Mirage or Reality?' (1947) (139–45), is a welcome publication of this previously unpublished essay. This speech shows Locke at his finest. Here's an excerpt:

For in the realm of religion and morals must come one of its chief uses and vindications. ... Although there has been considerable organizational initiative and effort in world-wide religious rapprochement, there still is little internal renouncing on the part of religious bodies of their sectarian parochialisms and their mutually conflicting claims. Yet here obviously is the crux of the whole issue: if the brotherhood of man is an inescapable corollary of the 'fatherhood of God' principle, so also is the confraternity of religions. This enlightened religion must learn – that the realistic way to become a world religion is not through world pretensions and world rivalry, but through promoting world-wide peace and understanding and moral cooperation of all sorts on a world scale. On that outcome hangs a goodly part of any real ideological peace, since religion, for all its universalistic claims, instead of being a universalizer has so often been the prime weapon of partisan strife and limited parochial attitudes and loyalties.

(144)

Robert Danisch, in chapter 9, 'Cosmopolitanism and Epideictic Rhetoric' (147–64), presents an original thesis, which is that '*The New Negro*, given its hermeneutical practices, is a special form of epideictic rhetoric' (151). Often referred to elsewhere as 'praise and blame' oratory, Aristotle's definition of epideictic rhetoric is provided (149–50), but not with sufficient

clarity for the uninitiated reader. True, '*The New Negro* does not include a single orator or public speaker' (152). Danisch focuses on Locke. Locke is part of the epideictic tradition because he (1) praises the virtue and value of African American art; (2) valorizes art's role in fostering race pride as a bulwark against racism; cites notable examples to inspire further artistic excellence; stresses the role of African American art vis-à-vis the wider American society; and stresses the role of values in improving social relations (161).

David Weinfeld, in chapter 10, 'What Difference Does Difference Make? Horace Kallen, Alain Locke, and the Birth of Cultural Pluralism' (165–87), revisits the origins of the term, 'cultural pluralism' – a philosophical term of art that was the predecessor of the more familiar concept of 'multiculturalism' – which was coined in 1907 conversations between Horace Kallen and Alain Locke at Oxford when Locke posed the question (which forms this chapter's title): 'What difference does difference make?' (165). Weinfeld's essay is assiduously historical, skilfully critical, and adroitly nuanced. It is arguably the best essay in this volume. The analysis elucidates and illuminates both harmonics and dissonances between Kallen's and Locke's respective philosophies of cultural pluralism.

Chielozone Eze, in chapter 11, 'Ethnocentric Representations and Being Human in a Multiethnic Global World: Alain Locke Critique' (189–202), asks an interesting question: 'Is Obama the cosmopolitan that Alain Locke dreamed about?' (189). The answer to this excellent question is left unanswered.

Terrance MacMullan, in chapter 12, 'Global Citizenship through Reciprocity: Alain Locke and Barack Obama's Pragmatist Politics' (203–16), thematizes 'common strands of thought evidenced by both men' (213). MacMullan treats 'Locke's Vision of Pluralistic Democracy' that led him 'to develop an ideal of peace through reciprocity' (207). Reciprocity – mutuality of rights and responsibilities – is central to Locke's philosophy. Thus 'Locke's call for value pluralism and cosmopolitan democracy is a pragmatic path to global peace' (207).

After quoting from one of Locke's *Bahá'í World* essays, 'The Orientation of Hope' (1936), MacMullan adds: 'Locke believed that the spiritual pluralism of his Bahá'í faith would provide direction for humanity's hope' (207). While undeveloped, this recognition of Locke's Baha'i affiliation and worldview adds a depth and dimension missing in the other essays. In the section, 'Lockean Elements of Obama's Political Philosophy' (207–12), MacMullan quotes from President Obama's Inaugural Address, in which the president spoke of America's world role:

For we know that our patchwork heritage is a strength, not a weakness. We are a nation of Christians and Muslims, Jews and Hindus – and non-believers. We are shaped by every language and culture, drawn from every end of this Earth; and because we have tasted the bitter swill of civil war and segregation, and emerged from that dark chapter stronger and more united, we cannot help but believe that the old hatreds shall someday pass; that the lines of tribe shall soon dissolve; that as the world grows smaller, our common humanity shall reveal itself; and that America must play its role in ushering in a new era of peace.

(Qtd. 209–10)

Following this ‘admittedly charitable reading of both Locke and Obama’ (213), MacMullan raises two issues that represent challenges to President Obama: capitalism and gay and lesbian rights.

Jacoby Adeshai Carter’s ‘goal’ in chapter 13, ‘New Moral Imperatives for World Order: Alain Locke on Pluralism and Relativism’ (217–33) is ‘to provide greater clarity to Locke’s conceptual instruments’ and to ‘bring Locke’s philosophy into meaningful conversation’ (218) with contemporary social issues. Carter reviews Locke’s pluralism – the most formidable barrier to which is absolutism – then cultural relativism, then both pluralism and relativism as ‘moral imperatives’ in a ‘Democratic World Context’.

As for editing, it was purely by happenstance, and not by design, that the present reviewer spotted some glaring typographical errors, as noted above: i.e. ‘ethic [*sic*: read ‘ethnic’] culture?’ (61); ‘B’há’i [*sic*: read ‘Bahá’í’] faith’ (64); ‘cultural produce’ [*sic*: read ‘product’] (70); ‘A Funtional [*sic*: read ‘Functional’] Peace’ (83); ‘induced [*sic*: read ‘induce’] cultural transformation’ (134).

As a thematic project (and not merely a conference proceedings volume), while the essays relate to the overarching theme of world citizenship rather unevenly, they do so in concert, with no discordance. The Baha’i dimension in Locke’s thought, although undeveloped, is given pride of place with ‘Unity Through Diversity: A Bahá’í Principle’ as the second piece. Publication, apparently for the first time, of Locke’s 1947 speech, ‘World Citizenship: Mirage or Reality?’, (1947) is welcome. If indeed published for the first time, then the editors should have drawn attention to this publication ‘event’.

Philosophic Values and World Citizenship is a welcome contribution to scholarship on Alain Locke, showcasing him not only as a philosophical precursor to President Barack Obama, but as a man ahead of his time – with now being that time. This volume goes far in bringing Locke back to influential life. Carter and Harris are to be commended for their vision in conceiving this project, which brings Alain Leroy Locke into contemporary relevance as a major philosopher of cosmopolitanism and world peace. (Locke typically gets stuck in the Harlem Renaissance.) Universities may find this book to be a worthwhile adjunct to global studies. This volume, particularly because of its curricular relevance to contemporary issues of global concern, is also recommended for graduate courses in philosophy.

Endnotes

1. Alain Locke, ‘Unity through Diversity: A Bahá’í Principle’, in *The Bahá’í World: A Biennial International Record*, vol. 4, 1930–1932, Wilmette: Bahá’í Publishing Trust, 1933, 372–4. Reprint (Wilmette: Bahá’í Publishing Trust, 1980). Reprinted again in Locke, *The Philosophy of Alain Locke*, ed. Leonard Harris, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991, 133–8.
2. See Alain Locke, ‘Cultural Relativism and Ideological Peace’, *Approaches to World Peace*, ed. Lyman Bryson, Louis Finkelstein and R. M. MacIver, New York: Harper & Brothers, 1944, 609–18. Reprinted in *The Philosophy of Alain Locke* (1991), 67–78 [73].

Compassionate Woman: The Life and Legacy of Patricia Locke.
 John Kolstoe. Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 2011.
 226 pp.

ISBN 978-1-931847-85-8 (pbk), \$21.00. Also available as eBook.

Reviewed by **Linda Covey**, *Liaoning Normal University-Missouri State University*
 Email: lindacovey@missouristate.edu

John Kolstoe, author and consultant, tells the story of friend and fellow educator Lakota Indian Patricia Locke, through the lens of her work to achieve equal education for American Indian youth and equal rights for indigenous people everywhere. In this concise and easy-to-read biography, Kolstoe's in-depth research provides its readers with a comprehensive view of what Locke struggled for, what she achieved, and how she dramatically changed the lives of thousands of Indian youth by establishing the first colleges on American Indian reservations. In a straightforward and non-condemning way, Kolstoe's *Compassionate Woman* provides details that may remain unknown to today's non-native reader regarding historical governmental policies towards American Indians. In addition, historians, sociologists and scholars in American Indian Studies as well as in religious studies, will find *Compassionate Woman* a useful resource and reference tool for their own work and that of their students. Kolstoe's methodology employs a concise and well-documented timeline of the most dominant issues in Native America that encompassed – not only Locke's life and her ancestors – but the life of every native person on all levels, whether legal, moral, spiritual, physical or educational. During the 1960s and 1970s, American Indians, in both militant and peaceful ways, brought critical native issues to the forefront of the American nation, demanding the nation's long overdue attention and resolutions. Insights into a turbulent and pivotal time period in American history can be gained through the window of Locke's life and how she strove to help her people resolve these issues for native people, and for the nation. Kolstoe leads readers into *Compassionate Woman* with a succinct statement that he is not attempting to 'provide a complete list' of Locke's 'activities or achievements' but rather to provide 'vignettes' or written portraits of 'this remarkable woman' (ix).

Provide vignettes he does, but Kolstoe does more than just give portraits of an interesting but relatively unknown woman to most Americans outside the arenas of education, the Baha'i Faith, the Standing Rock reservation in South Dakota; and those echelons of power in Washington, DC that Locke dared to invade on behalf of her Indian people. *Compassionate Woman* carries the capacity to engage the hearts and minds of its readers by introducing them to a 'warrior' woman, passionate about education, children, youth, indigenous rights and religious freedoms. Kolstoe begins *Compassionate Woman* with chapter 1 'The Funeral', by highlighting the impact that Locke's life and work had on a wide variety of people from highly diverse backgrounds. 'Who was this Lakota woman of humble origin', Kolstoe asks, 'for whom obstacles were the ladder of life?' (6). Kolstoe continues to ask and answer this question throughout the remaining 16 chapters

of *Compassionate Woman* by telling the story of how Locke persevered in spite of her humble origins – persevered enough to obtain a college education ‘against all odds’; to be inducted into the National Women’s Hall of Fame; to become the first American Indian woman elected to serve on the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha’is of the United States; to win the prestigious MacArthur Fellowship award; and to be listed as one of the two ‘most outstanding Sioux Indians’ next to Sitting Bull (6–7).

Answers to Kolstoe’s question begin in chapter 2 ‘The Early Years’ with Locke’s birth and growing up, and continues on into chapter 3 ‘Heritage’. In native cultures a person is introduced by where they came from and who their ancestors are. Titles and accolades come second to ancestors and heritages that define and shape one’s roots – and therefore one’s life. Kolstoe’s work encapsulates important details, adds and blends facets of Locke’s heritage into American history by squarely placing her ancestors’ lives into the framework of colonialism, broken treaties and white dominance that forever changed the landscape of Native America.

In chapter 4 ‘Marriage and Family Life’ Kolstoe addresses Locke’s early adulthood and parenting, giving the first glimpses of Locke’s determination to value and educate children at all costs, starting with her own. Subsequent marital problems coupled with a difficult relocation (in chapter 5 ‘Alaska’) starts Locke on her journey of setting things right for indigenous people, volunteerism, coming into the political eye as she manoeuvred through the political system, and moving forward into the arenas of education, establishing tribal colleges, and native language preservation (in chapter 6 ‘Tribal Colleges’).

Kolstoe shows how Locke’s life, like a stone dropped into still water, created overlapping circles that continually spiralled outward, reaching and overcoming, growing wider and wider to embrace all in her path until her energy transitioned the final shore of crossing over (death). Kolstoe nimbly weaves Locke’s life from multiple patterns and paths, bringing his readers to a convergent frame of reference that continues to motivate and inspire. Two copies of *Compassionate Woman* travelled with me to China and were loaned to individuals connected to both education and indigenous issues. Robert Giebitz, educator and writer with relationship ties to the Navajo Nation, tells how *Compassionate Woman* informed him, yet poses another question about Locke’s intriguing life:

Thanks for introducing me to *Compassionate Woman* – a tremendous inspiration. This is an important reminder of our history and of what America has of enduring value to share with China – China needs to hear the story of the native peoples of the Americas. A couple of things I found interesting were the sociologists’ determination of American values: mercantilism (commercialism), acquisitiveness, and individualism. I did not know about Lincoln’s brutality toward the Native Americans. ... Yesterday, I was reading about Patricia’s time in Peru and Bolivia. It brought back fond memories [of his time in Bolivia]. ... I wonder if Patricia met Andres Jachakollo – an exceptional man – the first native believer [Baha’i] in Bolivia. ...¹

Gregory Vessey, New Zealander entrepreneur, businessman and teacher with strong connections to the Maori aborigines of New Zealand, uses the concept of calling on master minds to aid him in his life and work. Vessey

said that he removed Abraham Lincoln, whom he had greatly admired, from his 'council of master minds' after reading *Compassionate Woman*.² Kolstoe notes, 'The policy of Lincoln's administration was "to kill as many Indians as possible"' (124–5). Kolstoe's intent is not to malign, attack or defame American historical figures. Rather, Kolstoe brings to the reader's attention Locke's life as a continuation of her ancestors and heritage. Kolstoe's work is, in accordance with most biographical stories about American Indians and American history, seen through Indian eyes.

Perhaps the most telling example of how *Compassionate Woman* can inform and educate while changing hearts and minds comes from a Chinese professor who spent a year in Canada studying the First Nations people, falling in love with their culture along the way. Associate Professor Lily Wang, a highly motivated and deeply committed educator, uses North American traditional culture to teach her Chinese college students the English language. Wang has written numerous articles, published both in Canada and China, about how Canada educates its First Nations people. Chinese scholars acknowledge Wang as a North American traditional culture expert, often called upon to inform them about education among Canada's indigenous people. China, a nation with 56 ethnicities, looks towards Canada and the United States as examples of how to treat – or not to treat – their own ethnicities. After reading *Compassionate Woman*, Wang emphatically declared, 'I have a new hero [in Patricia Locke]!' ³ Wang's statement is a strong testament to Kolstoe's work.

Kolstoe moves into the final chapters of *Compassionate Woman* with Locke's middle years (in chapter 7 'Freelance Years') of continued work for 'Native American self-determination' as he continues to weave Locke's many accomplishments together into a coherent whole (73). Kolstoe educates his readers about important native issues that Locke worked on, such as the American Indian Religious Freedom Act (76–81); native language preservation (81–5); and the preservation of native sacred sites (85–8). In her later years (in chapter 8 'Reservation Life') Locke moves into 'Elderhood'⁴ and onto her beloved Standing Rock reservation to finish out her life writing, serving the Baha'i Faith, and travelling (in chapter 13 'Bolivia and Peru'). However, Kolstoe clearly shows that the most important part of Locke's life was her children and grandchildren (in chapter 9 'Her Family'). Kolstoe's biography positions Locke as the gravitational centre around which her adult children and their children rotated. Kolstoe writes, 'Deep and ardent as her passions were for Indian education, language preservation, rights for Indians and women, the environment, worldwide indigenous rights, and so on, they pale in comparison to the adoration she felt for her children and grandchildren' (95). Here we see Kolstoe portray Locke's warrior woman stance at its most intense, overseeing her children's and grandchildren's cultural and academic educations, and flowing over to those who surrounded her (in chapter 10 'Friends and Neighbors').

Kolstoe carries Locke's warrior woman stance into her compassionate woman stance when he portrays the other half of Locke's nature in chapter 11 'Tłhawáchiŋ Wašté Wín: Compassionate Woman', exemplified in the Indian name she was given at the age of 41 in 1969, which translates into "'Good-hearted Woman", "She has a consciousness", or "Compassionate Woman"' (114). In just a few pages Kolstoe provides his readers with a general but satisfactory explanation of how and when one

obtains an Indian name and then goes into detail about how Locke received her name because ‘she embodied the four virtues most prized by the Lakota – generosity, bravery, respect and wisdom (111).⁵ Kolstoe shows how these qualities can both exemplify the persona of a warrior and the persona of a compassionate person without creating dissonance or disunity (114). He briefly addresses some of the tensions that existed between Locke’s warrior woman stance and her compassionate woman stance before Locke accepted the Baha’i Faith and shows how she changed some of her ideas, attitudes and decision-making methods based on the principles of her new faith (150). Through interviews with individuals who were a part of Locke’s decision-making process Kolstoe shows not only how Locke changed and adapted, but also how she encouraged others to change their own thought processes and behaviours.

Kolstoe began his work with Locke’s funeral and ends the final three chapters with chapter 15 ‘Her Passing’ (162–5), followed by looking at Locke’s distinctions – a rarefied list relatively unknown even to close friends due to Locke’s ‘modesty and living up to her Lakota name’ (167–74). Kolstoe notes that Locke ‘wore each honour lightly’ (168). Chapter 16 ‘Tributes and Remembrances’ contain vignettes from individuals whom Locke’s life touched in special ways (174–93). Kolstoe closes with an epilogue addressing the ‘seachanges’ sweeping the world since the 1800s, in which Locke, as well as her ancestors and her descendents, played and are playing important and decisive parts. Kolstoe writes that Locke ‘understood the different perspectives people had and the need to speak in a way others can understand’, sharing with others the Lakota way of enlightening rather than antagonizing; and poses a final question to his readers, ‘What would the world look like if more people followed her lead?’ (199).

This is an unusual work – unusual in its organization along timelines of Locke’s development rather than along the chronological line of dates and events common to most biographies. It is a profound work – a work that stays with one long after the reading is done, giving pause for thought and reflection. Kolstoe departs from the norm, taking his readers into places they were not expecting and perhaps not prepared for, educating and challenging at once, raising questions and leaving readers wanting to know – *more*.

Compassionate Woman deliberately resides on a table by my front door in China. When guests come they always pick it up, drawn to the picture of Locke’s face and penetrating eyes on its jacket. Locke stands in a field of grass up to her waist, wrapped in her Lakota shawl, with silvered hair flowing in the direction of the grasses bent in will to the wind of the South Dakota prairie highlands. Her wise and knowing eyes seemingly speak volumes to their viewers, saying ‘Who are you?’ ‘What do you know?’ ‘How are you doing?’ ‘*What* are you doing?’

What indeed!

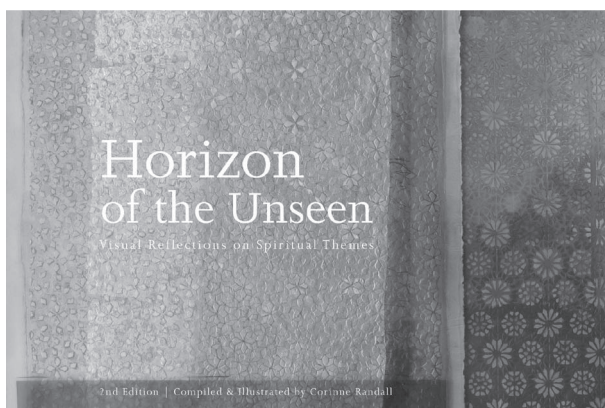
Endnotes

1. Personal communication, 5 May 2012, Dalian, China.
2. Personal communication, 21 June 2012, Dalian, China.
3. Personal communication, 28 February 2012, Dalian, China.

4. Being an Elder in the native way is not about the age one reaches but about the service that one gives or provides to others, regardless of whom those others might be or where they might live. The capitalized 'Elder' refers to such a status and sets the lower case 'elder' apart from simply being of a certain age. Locke was renowned for her unstinting, unselfish and devoted service to whoever needed her help.
5. One does not come into an Indian name 'full-blown', but spends the rest of his or her life working on emulating those qualities that led to the name in the first place. Kolstoe notes that Locke 'lived up to her name' (115).

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